

3. EVALUATING THE GALLERY

3.1. Aims

The aims of the gallery evaluation were:

- To assess the public's use, of and response to, the HSBC Money Gallery.
- To assess intellectual and physical access, both for the general public and for those with special requirements (from disabled users to specialists such as teachers and numismatists).
- To inform ourselves, and to inform Museum-wide and professional practice in relation to permanent displays and to the display of monetary objects. Especially, to inform decisions about minor changes to the HSBC Money Gallery (a budget is available for these) and to provide useful information for future temporary exhibitions relating to coins and banknotes.
- To report to our donor, HSBC. In the United States, project funding often requires an assessment of work done in order to demonstrate value for money and the success of the project to the funder. While this was not a requirement of HSBC, it is important to show donors that what we are doing with their money is good.

3.2. Front-end Evaluation

No systematic programme of 'front-end' evaluation was conducted in preparation for the HSBC Money Gallery. However, the exhibition *Cowrie shells to credit cards* (see introduction) acted as a 'trial-run' for many of the themes and ideas that were used in the gallery.

In addition, a limited front-end study relating to the gallery took place in late 1995. When planning the content of the gallery the Department was interested to find out how much members of the public already knew about some of the subjects that might be covered. Thirty visitors were interviewed, and were asked the following questions:

What do you think money is?

What do you think money is for?

When do you think coinage was invented?

Why do you imagine coinage was invented?

What do you think people used before coinage?

What do you think has been the most important development in the history of money in the last 500 years?

Those who were interviewed were selected in a 'random' but not structured way.

Despite the small size of the sample and the limited range of the questionnaire, some interesting results were obtained. It became clear, for example, that the

great majority of those questioned followed Aristotle in defining money as a 'medium of exchange' and that barter was generally thought to be the only system of exchange in operation before the advent of coinage. These findings were reflected in the final content of the gallery. Space was devoted to demonstrating that money can be used for purposes other than commerce and to the discussion of various monetary systems that do not rely on coins and banknotes.

3.3. Methodology

A variety of methods were chosen to evaluate the gallery end product. Two factors influenced this choice: the limited budget available for the evaluation, and the relatively small body of comparable research conducted on other British Museum galleries. The first of these factors meant that some techniques, such as professionally-led focus groups, were not available. The second suggested the importance of using a range of evaluative techniques. Our aim was by combining data from different methods to cross-check the findings to make them more reliable.¹ and to provide as holistic a picture as possible. The methods chosen were a visitor survey, 'tracking' of visitors in the gallery, specialist reports, and group interviews. In addition, an estimate of the number of visitors using the gallery was made.

3.3.1. Visitor count

The number of visitors using the gallery was counted over the course of seven one hour periods during the week beginning 1 November. Visitor numbers were counted at different times of the day and on different days of the week (excluding Saturday and Sunday). This count produced only a very approximate idea of the number of people using the gallery. An accurate estimate would have required visitor numbers to be counted over a much longer period, at different times of the year, and at weekends as well as during the week.

3.3.2. Questionnaire survey

A survey of visitors was considered to be the best way of getting a broad range of information and opinions from members of the public. The questionnaire focussed on the HSBC Money Gallery, but some questions that would provide general information

¹M. Borun, 'The stages of evaluation', 216-19, in G. Durbin (ed.), *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, London, 1996.

about the visitor and their visit to the Museum as a whole were included. A draft version of the survey was conducted on 10 visitors, and their responses led to a number of alterations. The finalised survey (see Appendix 4) was put to 100 respondents. Approximately two-thirds of the surveys were conducted at the west exit of the gallery, the remaining third being conducted at the east exit. Respondents were chosen in a structured random manner (normally the fifth person to pass the interviewing point after the conclusion of the previous interview). Questionnaire surveys were conducted both morning and afternoon and on various days of the week. However, no attempt was made either to be completely random or to be comprehensive in the times chosen for conducting the tracking. Although the questionnaires could possibly have worked without an interviewer this option was rejected. There are various problems with self-completed questionnaires, including the unrepresentative sample obtained and the risk of problems, such as misunderstanding, misreading or simply missing out questions, occurring.

Efficacy

Questionnaire surveys have the advantage of being relatively easy to control, particularly for an inexperienced interviewer. They allow specific questions to be asked and a set format to be followed. Owing to the standardised replies it is possible to analyse responses statistically and compare them with previous survey findings, when these exist. A particular difficulty with this form of research is that visitors are very reluctant to criticise (this is known as the 'halo effect'). National institutions, such as The British Museum, are generally held in high regard, and this, coupled with a desire to 'please' the interviewer, means that most people put a positive bias on their replies. Thus, the findings from the questionnaire survey are likely to paint a more positive picture than is actually the case. A good example of this is question 6 of the survey, which asks the visitor 'Approximately how long have you spent in the gallery?' (see 4.1.3 above). Another example is question 14, 'It is perfectly acceptable to find that there are some things you did not like about the gallery. Would you be willing to tell me something you did not like about the gallery?'. The wording of the question is designed to encourage a critical response, but nevertheless a frequent answer was something to the effect of 'no, I liked it all'.

Another disadvantage of a survey of this kind is that sampling may not be representative. Particular groups are less likely to agree to be interviewed (including families with young children and visitors with poor

English). Questionnaire surveys are also time-consuming, both in preparation and in administration. Ideally a larger sample was needed for this survey, but time constraints made this impossible.

3.3.3. Observation

Two main observation studies were conducted. These were intended to assess visitor use of the gallery in a way that would complement the information provided by the questionnaire survey. In particular, it was hoped that observing visitor behaviour would provide objective and reliable data about how long individuals spent in the gallery, and which parts of the exhibition were most heavily used.

In the first study, the progress of 60 visitors was mapped and timed as they moved through the gallery. Thirty of these visitors entered the gallery from the east entrance, thirty from the west. The visitors were chosen randomly (normally the fifth person to enter the gallery from a particular entrance after the previous subject had exited). The precise movement of the visitor was recorded and any stops of 10 seconds or longer were noted. Stops of less than 10 seconds are hard to time, and 10 seconds or more seemed a reasonable minimum time to allow for a good look at an object or to read a label. Tracking took place both morning and afternoon and on various days of the week. However, as with the questionnaires, no attempt was made either to be completely random or to be comprehensive in the times chosen for conducting the tracking.

In a follow-up to this study, four cases in the gallery were individually observed, each for three periods of 10 minutes. During these periods the number of visitors stopping for any length of time at the cases was noted. Two wall cases (12 and 18) and two island cases (10 and 13) were selected for observation. Each case was observed mid-morning, late morning, early afternoon and mid-afternoon.

The second study was carried out by Nigel Marshall, a research associate at the University of Durham, and is included in full as appendix 2d. Four different methods of observation were used in the study. The first was to make a tally of the cases in the gallery which had visitors using them every 15 seconds for a period of 5 minutes. This exercise was carried out four times at different times of the day. In the second method the gallery was observed for 1 minute periods. Each time a case was attended by a visitor during that minute, it was recorded. Once an exhibit had been recorded, further visits were not recorded. In the third method, five cases in the gallery were selected for observation. Each case was observed for one minute at a time and the total number of visitors attending the case was noted. In addition, the

total time within the minute during which the case was being used was monitored and totalled up. In the fourth method, four cases were observed. Each case was monitored for 15 minutes. Every visit, and the length of time of each visit, was recorded.

Efficacy

It rapidly became clear that observation would be a particularly valuable form of evaluation. What people say they do and what they actually do are two different things. It allowed a host of questions about how the gallery was used to be answered in an objective way. The main disadvantage of such observation is that, if used without the support of other methods of evaluation, nothing is learned of *why* visitors behave as they do. There is little point in knowing that visitors like or do not like a particular case or gallery without knowing why this is so. Observation therefore needs to be balanced with a genuine understanding of visitor opinion.² Observation is also most effective when put in context. It is unclear, for example whether the 5½ minutes the average 'stopping' visitor spends in the HSBC Money Gallery is a short time or a long one. Comparisons with other similar Museum galleries are needed. As with questionnaire surveys, observation can be very time consuming.

3.3.4. Reports from specialists

Reports were commissioned from specialists in a number of areas that could not be effectively assessed by the use of questionnaires or tracking surveys. As Griggs (1984) noted:

The value of critical appraisal lies in having a sensitive expert, one who can identify problems applying skills which the museum professional does not have....the aim is to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the exhibition as it stands so that strengths can be built on and weaknesses overcome.³

The specialists were:

Access: Ms Sue Picton, an education consultant who was formerly employed by the Museum as Access Officer.

Museology and numismatics: Professor Ian Carradice, Keeper of the Collections at the University of St Andrews. Professor Carradice is a former member of the Department of Coins and Medals with

wide-ranging numismatic expertise. He also lectures in museology. Professor Carradice was asked to assess how effectively he felt the Department had achieved the primary aims it expressed before beginning the gallery project.

Education: Ms Lisa Geelhood, Education Director at Blanden Art Museum, Iowa. Ms Geelhood was commissioned to produce a report on the educational use of the gallery.

Efficacy

Specialist reports are a good way of evaluating aspects of a gallery or exhibit that the 'average' visitor cannot comment on. They were an effective complement to the other forms of evaluation.

3.3.5. Group interviews

Four detailed interviews were carried out with groups who had visited the HSBC Money Gallery. Three of these were families with children, since group interviews were thought to be the best way of gaining an accurate impression of how accessible and interesting children found the gallery. The fourth interview was with a group of amateur numismatists. All of the interviews took broadly the same form, dealing with similar topics to those covered by the questionnaire survey.

Efficacy

Group interviews, or focus groups, should ideally be conducted by a trained leader. Even informal groups interviews, however, are very useful. They are a time-effective way of discussing broad or specific points and of receiving critical as well as positive comments. The families interviewed for this report were especially open and honest in giving opinions about the HSBC Money Gallery.

All of the above methods added something to this report. The questionnaire survey was the most time-consuming part of the report, and perhaps did not justify the time spent on it in terms of the information it provided about the HSBC Money Gallery. It did, however, supply other information about visitor profiles and visitor opinions on the Museum as a whole. For an evaluation report on a single gallery, a combination of observation and group interviews would be a simple and effective method of obtaining information.

²D. Prince, 'Approaches to summative evaluation', in *Manual of Curatorship: A guide to museum practice*, 2nd edn, Oxford 1992.

³Griggs, S., 'Evaluating Exhibitions', in J.M.A. Thompson (ed.), *Manual of Curatorship*, London, 1984.

3.4. Results and Discussion

3.4.1. Visitor numbers

Over the seven hours surveyed, 5,117 visitors entered the gallery. If these 7 hours were taken to represent a typical day, then the gallery would receive about 1.8 million visits a year. In fact the figure may be higher than this since visitor numbers were not counted on Saturdays or Sundays (the busiest days of the week) and since more visitors come to the Museum during the summer than at other times of the year. Even given the unreliable nature of this estimate (based on only 7 hours observation) these figures indicate that the gallery is used by large numbers of visitors.

3.4.2. Questionnaire survey

Visitor Profile

Age

8-16	7%
17-24	18%
25-34	25%
35-44	9%
45-54	11%
55-64	14%
65+	16%

Sex

55% of those interviewed were male, 45% were female.

Home

A high proportion of those questioned (68%) lived abroad. 21% lived in the London area, and 11% lived in other parts of the UK. These figures are broadly in line with the results of other recent Museum surveys.

General information

1. *How many times have you previously visited The British Museum?*

59% of those interviewed were visiting the Museum for the first time. 30% had been to the Museum on between 1 and 5 previous occasions, and 11% had visited the museum more than 5 times.

Of the 32 UK residents questioned, 13 (41%) were visiting The British Museum for the first time. Of the 68 non-UK residents, 46 (or 68%) were first-time visitors.

2. *When was the last time you visited?*

Of the 41 visitors who had been to the Museum before, 12 (29%) had been within the last 6 months, 9 (22%) within the last year, and 9 (22%) within the last 3 years. 11 (27%) of those who had been to the Museum before had not visited in the last 3 years.

3. *Are you visiting the Museum alone or with others?*

Of those interviewed 35% were visiting the Museum alone, 50% were visiting with one companion, 10% were visiting with 2-4 companions and 5% were visiting with five or more companions.

The HSBC Money Gallery

4-5. *Did you know about the HSBC Money Gallery before you visited the Museum? How did you hear about the gallery?*

18% of those questioned had known about the HSBC Money Gallery before coming to the Museum on this visit. Of these, 8% had heard about the gallery through personal recommendation, 7% had seen the gallery on a previous visit to the Museum, 2% had seen posters advertising the gallery and 1% had seen it mentioned in a British Museum Press catalogue. The percentage of visitors hearing about the gallery through other media such as newspapers would presumably have been higher if the interviews had been conducted soon after the gallery opening.

6. *Approximately how long have you spent in the gallery?*

32% of visitors reported that they had spent more than 15 minutes in the gallery. 22% reported visiting for 1-5 minutes, 28% spent 5-10 minutes, and 13% spent 10-15 minutes. Only 5% said they were 'passing through' the gallery. The results of this question were predictably inaccurate, due to what is known as the 'halo effect' (the desire to 'please' the interviewer).

In comparison to these figures the observation study carried out in the gallery indicated that:

- only 5% of visitors spend more than 15 minutes in the gallery;
- the average time spent in the gallery is just over 3½ minutes;
- 37% of visitors pass through the gallery without stopping for a period of 10 seconds or more at any case.

7. *Could you see all of the objects clearly?*

92% of visitors were able to see all of the objects clearly. Of the 8 who could not, 2 stated that some objects were too high to be visible. 6 could not see all of the details they wanted to on the coins and banknotes (3 of these said they had poor eyesight). One visitor suggested that magnifying glasses over some coins would help, another that more enlarged photographs of the objects would be an aid.

8-9. *How easy was it to understand the panels and labels?*

Nearly half (49%) of the visitors questioned said they found the panels and labels 'very easy' to understand. 38% found them 'quite easy' and 4% found them 'neither easy nor difficult'. For 5% of visitors they were 'quite difficult' and for 4% 'very difficult'.

The information panels and labels were praised by the majority of visitors. The most frequently-repeated comments were that the information was clear and concise. The numbering, pictures and enlargements, system of headings and sub-titles, and font and layout of text were also praised.

From those who found the information more difficult to understand, the main criticisms were the use of technical words, the lack of foreign-language labels and the size of the text. Two visitors also complained about a lack of clarity, one saying that colour-coding of different types of information would help, another that the objects were numbered in a confusing way.

10. *Are you aware of any publications linked to this*

gallery?

Only 8 of 100 visitors were aware of any publications linked to the gallery. This is surprising since an advertisement for the two books and CD-ROM published in conjunction with the gallery is included in the HSBC Money Gallery. It suggests that the advertisement needs re-designing and/or moving if it is to be effective.

11. *Are you aware that a gallery leaflet is available for use with the HSBC Money Gallery? Did you buy it and how useful did you find it?*

21 of 100 visitors were aware of the gallery leaflet. Four out of 5 visitors therefore did not have the option of using a gallery leaflet to complement their visit. Again, this suggests that more attention needs to be drawn to this service. Of the 21 visitors who were aware of the leaflet, 4 purchased it (at a cost of 50pence). One of these said that the leaflet was 'very useful', the other 3 described it as 'quite useful'.

12. *If you were describing this gallery to a friend, which three words would you use?*

Of the 17 positive and negative words or phrases offered, three were not used by any visitor ('useless', 'boring' and 'uncomfortable'). The following list shows the frequency of use of the remaining 14:

interesting	84
attractive	54
bright	32
relevant	23
special	22
exciting	16
good for kids	11
fun	9
cheerful	5
hard to understand	4
doesn't relate to me	4
airless	4
uninteresting	2
noisy	2

Even taking into account the visitor's desire to please the questioner, the response to this question seems overwhelmingly favourable. Eight positive and 7 negative words were supplied, but no negative word attracted more than 4 responses. A number of responses to this question were invalidated by the use of words not offered in the questionnaire (these were on the whole positive).

13. *What, if anything, do you find particularly attractive or appealing about the gallery?*

The most popular responses to this question were:

- the thematic nature of the display (and the comparison of different cultures in one gallery);
- the modern and light appearance of the gallery;
- the layout and design of the cases;

- specific objects or types of objects, such as hoards, reducing machine, old banknotes.

14. *It is perfectly acceptable to find that there are some things you did not like about the gallery. Would you be willing to tell me something you did not like about the gallery?*

The wording of this question was intended to counteract the visitor's desire to please the questioner, and encourage some criticism. Despite this, more than half of visitors had no criticism to make. The most frequent criticisms were:

- bolder headings needed;
- hard to know where to start in the gallery;
- some of the labels were difficult and the numbering was confusing at times;
- noisy and busy;
- a clearer idea needed of the main peoples and cultures involved in the history of money;
- specific criticisms about the absence of certain objects (not enough Scottish, French, German money).

15. *Many galleries are about places in time, like Ancient Egypt or Ancient Greece. This one is about a particular theme – Money. Do you like galleries better if they are themed or historical?*

39 visitors said that they preferred thematic galleries, 20 that they preferred historical galleries and 41 that they had no preference (or thought that both were appropriate). Since this question was asked in the context of a questionnaire about a thematic gallery, the 'halo effect' would encourage visitors to state a preference for thematic galleries. Even taking this bias into account, however, it seems clear that visitors believe thematic galleries like the HSBC Money Gallery to be appropriate in The British Museum.

16. *Are you aware that this gallery is supported by a sponsor and do you know who the sponsor is?*

27 of 100 visitors were aware that the gallery was supported by a sponsor. Of these, 20 (or 74%) were able to name HSBC as the sponsor.

17. *Would you be interested in: a) listening to a talk in the gallery; b) attending a lecture about the history of money; c) having an activity to do in the gallery that gives you more information, d. reading more about the history of money?*

The visitor could choose any or none of these options. 21% of visitors were not interested in any further information. 52% would like to listen to a talk in the gallery. 34% were interested in having an activity to do in the gallery. 29% were interested in reading more about the subject, and 27% would be interested in attending a lecture about the history of money. Generally, younger visitors were keener to use

activities in the gallery, older visitors would prefer attending lectures and reading to expand their knowledge. Visitors of all ages were interested in gallery talks.

Quality of services offered by the Museum

18. *Thinking of the Museum as a whole, how would you rate the following? Shops, restaurant, toilets, directions, overall quality.*

Shops

71% of those interviewed had not used the shops. Of those who had, 48% rated them 'very good', 38% 'quite good' and 14% 'neither good nor poor'.

Restaurant

80% of those interviewed had not used the restaurant. Of those who had, 35% thought it 'very good', 35% 'quite good', 20% 'neither good nor poor', and 10% 'rather poor'.

Toilets

64% of those interviewed had not used the toilets. Of those who had, 17% thought them 'very good', 47% 'quite good', 14% 'neither good nor poor', and 22% 'rather poor'.

Directions

13% of visitors rated directions in the Museum as 'very good', 41% as 'quite good', 22% as 'neither good nor poor', and 24% as 'rather poor'.

Overall quality

49% of visitors rated the overall quality of their visit to the Museum as 'very good', 34% as 'quite good' and 17% as 'neither good nor poor'.

Visitors were very happy with the Museum shops and reasonably happy with the restaurant (the main criticism of the latter was the cost). A significant proportion of visitors did not think that the toilets were satisfactory (more than a third rated them 'quite poor' or 'very poor'). 46% of visitors were unhappy with the clarity of directions in the Museum. Despite criticisms of these last two aspects, 83% of visitors rated the overall quality of their visit to the Museum as 'very good' or 'quite good' and none rated their visit as either 'quite poor' or 'very poor'.

3.4.3. Observation

The gallery as a thoroughfare

The position of the HSBC Money Gallery means that some people will use it purely as a route to get to other galleries. One of the aims stated in the gallery's initial design brief was that it should be 'appropriate to the size, shape and architecture of the gallery and take account of its position on a major route'. Island cases with spectacular displays were specifically included 'to encourage as many of the passing visitors as possible to

stop and look further' (see Appendix 1).

- Of the 60 visitors observed as part of the evaluation project, more than a third (22 or 37%) passed through without stopping for 10 seconds or more at any case. This figure is broadly in line with an observation study carried out in the Museum's old Roman Britain galleries (Rooms 35 and 40), where almost half of those tracked spent less than 1 minute in the rooms.
- A higher proportion of visitors passed straight through when entering the gallery from the west entrance (43% compared to 30%). This is not surprising. Being located to the right of the main stairs, the HSBC Money Gallery will be the first gallery visited by many of those entering from the east. Those entering from the west will already have visited several galleries or possibly have already passed through the HSBC Money Gallery from the south. This provides some evidence of an 'exit gradient', a phenomenon noted in individual galleries at the Natural History Museum. Visitors are likely to spend more time viewing the beginning of a gallery than the end. Similarly, visitors are likely to spend more time in galleries viewed towards the beginning of their visit to the Museum than towards the end.

The length of visit

- Overall, the average visitor spent 216 seconds, or just over 3½ minutes in the gallery. Visitors entering the gallery from the east spent an average of 288 seconds, or about 5 minutes. Those entering from the west averaged only half this amount of time (144 seconds).
- Excluding people who walked through the gallery without pausing, the average visitor spent 341 seconds (more than 5½ minutes) in the gallery.
- Visitors entering from the east (excluding those who did not stop) spent an average of 411 seconds (nearly 7 minutes) in the gallery. Excluding 'non-stoppers', those entering from the west averaged 255 seconds.

These figures provide further evidence of an 'exit gradient' on a Museum-wide scale. Not only are visitors who have already used several galleries more likely to pass through the HSBC Money Gallery, they are also likely to spend less time on their visit.

- The longest visit among the 60 people randomly chosen for observation was 18 minutes and 45 seconds. The shortest was 22 seconds! Other visitors not selected for observation were noted to have spent periods of longer than half an hour in the gallery.

Time spent looking at exhibits

- The average visitor spent 148 seconds (2½ minutes)

of their 5½ minute stay in the gallery actually looking at exhibits (this excludes stops of less than 10 seconds and objects observed 'on the move').

- Visitor stopped at an average of 2 or 3 cases each and spent an average of 56 seconds looking at each case. This compares favourably with the findings of other studies which suggests that the average time a visitor spends before a display is between 20 and 45 seconds.⁴
- A total of 45 stops of 1 minute or over at were made by visitors at individual cases. 32 of these stops were made by visitors entering the gallery from the east. 12 stops of 3 minutes or over were made. Eleven of these were made by visitors entering the gallery from the east.

Evaluation studies at the Natural History Museum have suggested that an average visitor spends only half of his or her time in a museum in exhibitions and galleries (the other half is spent being orientated, shopping, eating and so on). This study suggests something rather different: that while a visitor is actually in the HSBC Money Gallery, only half of his or her time is spent looking in any detail at exhibits. If the HSBC Money Gallery were typical, this may suggest that far less than half of a visitors time in The British Museum is spent looking in detail at objects (once time taken being orientated and so on is taken into account).

'Popular' and 'unpopular' cases

There were marked differences between the 'popularity' of different cases in the HSBC Money Gallery. Some were visited more frequently than others and for longer periods.

- The cases to attract the most stops of 10 seconds or more were:
 1. 18 ('Money in modern society', 1700-current)
 2. 15 ('Materials and manufacture', 1700-current)
 3. 17 ('Gold coins to gold cards', 1700-current)
- The cases to attract the fewest stops of 10 seconds or more were:
 - 1-3. 11 ('Money among the people', 600-1700)
 - 12 ('Empires, power and money', 600-1700)
 - 16 (geometric lathe)
- The cases to attract the most stops of 1 minute or more were jointly:

- 1 ('Early forms of money', 2500 BC – AD 600)
- 17 ('Gold coins to gold cards', 1700-current)
- 18 ('Money in modern society', 1700-current)

- The cases to attract the fewest stops of 1 minute or more were jointly:
 - 8 ('Metal and money supplies', 600-1450)
 - 9 ('Towards a world economy', 1450-1700)
 - 10 (Salcombe hoard)
 - 12 ('Empires, power and money', 600-1700)
 - 14 (Reducing machine)

Case 15 (Materials and manufacture, 1700-current) attracted five stops of 3 minutes or more. 7 cases (1, 2, 3, 5, 17, 18 and 19) all attracted 1 stop of 3 minutes or more. None of the remaining 11 cases attracted any stops of 3 minutes or more.

The popular cases

Overall, the observation suggested that the most popular cases for visits of at least 10 seconds were 18, 17, 15 and 1. It must be significant that three out of four of these cases deal with the period from 1700 to the present-day (the remaining 'modern' case, 19, was also popular). In terms of the overall amount of time spent using it (taking into account number of visits and length of visits), case 15 was the most popular in the gallery. The subject of this case is the manufacture of modern currency. It includes a section on the manufacture of pound coins and another on the production of banknotes. The second most popular case in these terms is 18, 'Money in modern society', which includes objects such as modern piggy banks and purses. The third most popular case, 'Gold coins to gold cards' incorporates the only display of credit cards in the gallery. Ten visitors who stopped at case 18 for 30 seconds or more were asked why they had done so. 6 out of 10 answered that they had seen something familiar, which drew them to the case.

All of the three most popular cases have one thing in common; they have items that are immediately recognisable and therefore immediately accessible to the visitor. Not all of the items in the cases are familiar, but those that are draw visitors who are then led to explore other parts of the case. Case 1, 'Early forms of money', was also popular. This may be partly the result of its location; it is the first case on the left of visitors who enter the gallery from the south, and most visitors turn to the left on entering a gallery. It also includes a variety of very different objects, including ingots and currency bars, and a 'coin tree' showing the development of ancient coinage.

The less popular cases

The least popular cases for stops of 10 seconds or more were 7, 16, 9, 12, 4, 10, 6, 8, 11 and 14. These

⁴Neal, A. 1965, 'Function of display: regional museums', *Curator*, 8(3), 228-34. Shettel, H.H. et al. 1968, *Strategies for Determining Exhibit Effectiveness*, American Institute for Research, Pittsburgh, PA.

fall into two distinct groups. 6 of the 10 are island cases. As mentioned above, these cases are intended to 'encourage as many of the passing visitors as possible to stop and look further'. They may be successful in doing this (see 'Island and wall cases' below), but they appear to be unsuccessful in holding the attention of visitors for 10 seconds or more. The only island case to regularly attract the attention of visitors for 10 seconds or more was 13, 'Counting, handling and testing money', which includes a spectacular early 20th-century cash till. The other four are the wall cases in the central part of the gallery, that deal with the period between AD 600 and 1700. Some of these cases may be unpopular because they are heavily coin-orientated (case 12, 'Empires, power and money' is the only case in the gallery not to include any non-coin items). Others, however, have a balance between coin and non-coin items; case 9, 'Towards a world economy' includes striking items like a Benin bronze and examples of massive Swedish plate money. It could be that the fact that none of the central cases attract as many visitors as cases at either end of the gallery partially reflects the position rather than the content of the cases.

Island and wall cases

Island and wall cases are clearly used in different ways by visitors to the HSBC Money Gallery. To further investigate this, two island cases and two wall cases were each observed for three periods of ten minutes. Stops of any length at the cases were noted. The island cases observed were number 13, the most popular island case, and number 10, the central case in the gallery which currently houses the Salcombe shipwreck hoard but more normally contains another hoard known as the Chancery hoard. The wall cases observed were 18, 'Money in modern society', which is a popular case, and 12, 'Empires, power and money', which is one of the less popular cases. Over the three periods, the following number of visitors stopped at the cases:

- Case 18: 65
- Case 10: 51
- Case 13: 48
- Case 12: 25

Measuring stops of any length, case 18 remained the most popular of the cases. The two island cases both attracted a relatively high number of stops. For case 10, in particular, the vast majority of the stops were for only a few seconds (many visitors stopped briefly to look at the hoard but did read the explanatory label).

The main introductory panels

One of the most surprising facts to emerge from the

observation survey was the apparent 'invisibility' of the gallery's main introductory panels. Identical panels introducing the HSBC Money Gallery and the history of money are located in prominent positions facing the entrances at either end of the gallery.

- Of the 60 visitors observed, not a single one visibly paused to read the introductory panel.

This is clearly a problem. The panels are intended to provide an initial context within which the contents of the gallery can be placed. The great majority of visitors, it appears, view the gallery without the benefit of this introduction. One reason for this may be the position of the panels. Perhaps their location in front of the entrances to the gallery discourages people from stopping, feeling that they may be blocking those entering the gallery behind them.

The chronology panels

In contrast to the introductory panels, several visitors stopped to use the 'chronology panels' which explain the main developments in the history of money. These are located to the left side of both entrances.

- 13 of 100 visitors stopped to use the chronology panels for more than 10 seconds. These 13 visitors spent an average of 74 seconds, or just over 1 minute, using the panels.

Visitor types

29 of the visitors observed in the gallery were male, 31 were female. The gallery was more popular with male than with female visitors. The average male spent 298 seconds, or 5 minutes, in the gallery. The average female spent 131 seconds, or just over 2 minutes, in the gallery. Part of this discrepancy is explained by the fact that female visitors were more than twice as likely as male visitors to walk straight through the gallery (21% of male visitors did not stop, as compared to 52% female visitors). Excluding those who did not stop for at least ten seconds at any case, the average male visitor spent 365 seconds (6 minutes) in the gallery, and the average female visitor spent 229 seconds (between 3 ½ and 4 minutes).

The reason for this marked difference is not clear. It may be that the difference would have been less clear-cut with a larger sample. Or it may be that the difference is real, and that men are simply more interested in the subject of the gallery than women. It is certainly true that the majority of coin collectors are male.

32 of the visitors observed in the gallery were alone, while the remaining 28 had one or more companions. Whether people were single or in a group seemed to have little effect on how likely they were to pass through the gallery without any significant stops, or on how long they spent in the

gallery. However, single visitors were more than twice as likely to spend long periods (3 minutes or more) at individual cases.

3.4.4. Specialist reports

Systematic observations of visitor behaviour by Nigel Marshall

The report (Appendix 2d) begins by describing in detail the theory and methodology of a battery of systematic observations carried out in the HSBC Money Gallery on three different days. Four methods of observation were used. These are described in Section 3.3.3., 'Methodology', above.

Findings

- The gallery exhibits were in frequent use throughout the day.
- Most cases in the gallery were visited at some point during each minute of the observation.
- The number of visitors to the gallery did not necessarily reflect the number of visitors viewing the objects. 'A larger number present did not necessarily mean more activity with the exhibits. Likewise the total number present in the gallery needed to fall quite low before an effect on the visits to exhibits was noted'. The report suggests that when the gallery is particularly busy, more people pass straight through. When a calmer and quieter atmosphere was presented, more visitors were tempted to stay longer.
- Visits to certain exhibits seemed to be either age or gender led. For example, where two or more persons were together it was often an older person who moved the group to case 13 (cash till). Similarly, it was often a man who moved a group to case 14 (reducing machine) and a woman who moved a group to a case with banknotes (15-19).
- Some cases, such as 1 and 2 ('Early forms of money' and 'Early monetary systems') did not receive many visits, but when they were visited the stops were often long (sometimes more than 5 minutes).

Overall, the report suggested that the most popular exhibits in terms of number of visits were those with less writing and brightly coloured exhibits. However, some of the cases which received fewer visits had the longest time spent on them by individuals. It concluded that:

Combining all the results from the above, the gallery thus seemed to present something for everyone in that it had exhibits which catered for those wishing to move through and see more highlights, but also more informative and interesting exhibits for those with a real and deeper interest.

Discussion document towards an evaluation of the HSBC Money Gallery for disabled visitors by Sue Picton

This report is included in full as Appendix 2a.

Physical access

Museum-wide considerations such as staff training and signage were discussed. Some problems with physical access are specific to the HSBC Money Gallery. These include:

- the Gallery Guide dispenser is too high for wheelchair users to reach;
- numbers in the cases are too small, and too close in colour to case dressing;
- there is no seating in the gallery;
- Some of the objects are not visible to wheelchair users or children. Some of the text, both labels and panels, is also too high to be read by wheelchair users or children.

Sensory access

- There is no opportunity for touching objects or using multi-media or other interactive devices in the gallery. Such devices benefit all visitors but can be particularly important for those with disabilities.
- Labels can be difficult to match to objects.
- Label copy is too small.
- Colour photographs can exclude visitors with visual impairments (line drawings are more suitable).

Intellectual access

'Money is an excellent choice of concept, as it has a relevance and meaning to the majority of visitors whatever their age, interest level, or ability.'

- Some of the themes are not easy to understand.
- The reading level for some of the text excludes a number of disabled and non-disabled visitors.
- Alternative formats are required for the Gallery Guide.

Summary

The report recognises the efforts the Museum has made in attempting to make the gallery and collection accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities. However, 'much remains to be done. The gallery assumes a significant level of literacy in English, previous experience and knowledge of museums in general, and no hearing, visual, mobility or intellectual impairment.' It suggests that two important steps would be:

- 1) to introduce new auxiliary aids such as audio guides and large-format text guides;
- 2) to clearly identify key objects in each case (this would make the case subjects more accessible for

a wide range of users).

Achieving the Department's aims by Ian Carradice

This report is included in full as Appendix 2b.

Objective 1: *The display will be appropriate to the size, shape and architecture of the Gallery and take account of its position on a major route.*

The report notes that the gallery was always busy, both with visitors viewing the cases and with people using the gallery as a corridor. However, the gallery seemed well able to handle visitor flow. It praises the cases, lighting and colour schemes, noting that the 'effect is of a display that 'fits' very well the space being used'.

Objectives 2-5: *Content of the display: quality and range of collections; chronological scheme; thematic presentations.*

The objects displayed in the gallery are described as being varied and of a high quality. They are presented in a way that should be clear to a person with some understanding of the subject. The report points out that some aspects of the themes in the gallery would not be apparent to all visitors, but that the gallery is designed so that the casual visitor can 'dip in' effectively. 'High-tech' interpretative devices would probably not have enhanced the gallery.

Objective 6: *The display will address the interests of all types of visitors, so that it will communicate with children, casual visitors, academics, etc.*

The report notes the various levels of information presented in the gallery, but that the detailed labels are 'inevitably' largely ignored by visitors. Island cases may attract more attention than wall cases, but non-coin items add to the attractiveness of the wall cases. The report questions whether these non-coin items actually lead the visitor to a greater understanding of numismatic concepts or merely attract passing attention. Most items would be visible to most visitors, although some were well above eye-level for children.

The gallery would certainly satisfy the more academic visitor.

Summary

The report indicates that, overall, the gallery is very successful. It suggests, though, that some themes and labels may not be accessible to all visitors.

Evaluation of the HSBC Money Gallery from an educational point of view by Lisa M. Geelhood

This report is included in full as Appendix 2c.

This report tested some of the Museum's aims for the HSBC Money Gallery. Each of these aims relate

to the gallery's educational use and had been stated in literature prepared for HSBC during the early stages of funding negotiations.

1. *The main aim of the new gallery is to show that the nature of money as they [the visitor] know it has its origins in a history reaching back more than four thousand years... Visitors will be able to follow the development of money through the centuries. Each case in the gallery will focus on a particular chapter in the story of money.*

The report emphasises the importance of encouraging a dialogue between the objects in the gallery and the visitor. In order to do this, audience characteristics must be fully understood. The implication is that the HSBC Money Gallery does not encourage full participation, perhaps because the likes and dislikes of the visitor were not fully taken into account when the gallery was created.

- One way of overcoming this – using visitor comment cards that help to break down the barriers between curatorial viewpoints and those of the visitor – is suggested.

The report also questions whether a sense of the larger scope of the gallery is contained within each case, pointing out that few visitors will view the gallery systematically.

2. *Our aim is to introduce the general public to our collections by presenting them in a context which all visitors will recognise.*

... hope to enable [visitors] 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...

The report again emphasises the importance of understanding the visitor, this time so that objects can be placed in a context that will have meaning for them. Because of the varying levels and experiences of the visitor, 'exhibits which present information on a multiplicity of levels are the most useful'. Although money is an accessible theme, the report questions whether visitors are really aware of the various sub-themes, and whether they know 'where they are' within the overall plan of the gallery.

- Narratives are suggested as a way of allowing the visitor to connect with the displays.
- Colour coding either in or outside the cases would aid recognition of main and sub-themes.

3. *The gallery will provoke the curiosity of the casual visitor and reveal the immense breadth and depth of our holding to the specialist...*

The display should be made as clear as possible by placing introductions at head height and putting object descriptions as close to the objects as possible. The descriptive text should be easy to find and read without detracting from the view of

the objects themselves.

The report stresses the importance of layering information to make it appropriate for as wide a range of visitors as possible.

- It suggests that the layering of information present in the HSBC Money Gallery could be extended, particularly through the use of graphics and extra-large wall text to indicate major sections and themes within the gallery.

Summary

In particular, the report questions whether visitors are really aware of the gallery's many sub-themes, and suggests ways of making the gallery more intellectually accessible.

3.4.5. Group interviews

Overall, the three family groups were very positive about their visit to the gallery. They considered the gallery to be suitable for children of almost any age as long as they were well supported by the adults accompanying them. The children particularly liked the modern section of the gallery and the cases containing hoards.

The group from a coin club praised almost every aspect of the gallery. Their main criticisms related to the scarcity or absence of particular objects ('I'm surprised there weren't more tokens...').

The principal criticisms and comments made by the four groups were as follows.

Information and visibility

- All of the families pointed out that there was a problem with children viewing objects near the top of cases and, especially, with reading information near the top of cases. The reading level of information was considered to be too high for young children, particularly since the simplest information (the introductory paragraphs) was at the top of the cases and was therefore not visible for the children. Changes of subject between and within cases were not obvious to children, again because headings were at the top of the case. The coin club members found that all of the objects they wanted to see were easily visible, although they would have liked some of the coins to be magnified, 'to see every detail'.
- Two of the families reported having trouble following object numbers to labels on occasion.
- Two of the families would have liked to have more guidance about how to use the gallery.

Appearance and layout

- All of the groups considered the gallery to be attractive and well-lit. They liked the contrast between more densely-populated wall cases and

island cases with large objects or hoards.

Comfort

- Two of the families and the coin club members found the flow of traffic in the gallery to be a problem, commenting that the entrances were very crowded. Tour groups were also mentioned as a problem, as was the fact that the gallery was too warm. The lack of seating was pointed out.

Content

- Understandably, some of the coin club members would have liked to see a greater representation of their own areas of interest. The family groups disliked cases with too many coins and wanted to see more about the future of money. Two of the families would have liked some sort of interactive element in the gallery.

Advertising

- None of the groups had noticed the panel advertising books and other products.

The Museum

- Directions in the Museum were considered to be a problem. The families found it hard to find their way from one part of the Museum to another. One commented that warders need to be better informed and another that it is not always obvious what the subject of a gallery is.
- The families were keen to have more areas for rest breaks in the Museum.
- There was a general emphasis on the importance of free access to the Museum. The families, in particular, noted that they did not have to spend too long in an attempt to get their 'money's worth', but instead could make short visits to particular galleries or groups of galleries.

3.4.6. Summary of press reviews

The many press reviews of the HSBC Money Gallery provide a useful additional source of information. Reviews in specialist publications, in particular, give valuable opinions on various aspects of the gallery. There follows a series of quotes from those press reviews that were critical, rather than purely descriptive. Reviews of the gallery are listed in Appendix 6.

National newspapers

Daily Telegraph, 5.2.97: 'This new gallery is an object lesson in how to make the most of a subject that might be dry.'

Financial Times, 31.1.97: '...a brilliantly conceived new gallery.'

Independent, 31.1.97: '...a fascinating study of how money came about 4000 years ago and what forms it

has since taken.'

Independent Long Weekend, 1.2.97, reviewing the gallery as a venue for a family outing: 'The explanatory texts seem aimed at 6ft bankers – who, unlike children, will find the information at eye level. Most of the exhibits are at lower altitude, but the overall impression is that the gallery is firmly for grown-up devotees of dosh.'

Times Educational Supplement, 11.3.97: '... the exhibition is highly informative... it will be essential visiting for anyone attempting to understand and teach this complex subject.'

Specialist publications

Antiques Trade Gazette, 15.3.97: 'This excellent new gallery is devoted to the theme of the development of money rather than merely as a showcase for spectacular coins, and is thus rendered more intelligible to everyone... The gallery is laid out so that whichever end one enters there is a coherent story... Finally, it is worth noting that this is a child-friendly gallery: many of the exhibits are low down.'

RSA Journal, 3.97: 'The aim throughout is didactic. Nor are we allowed to forget this: both the strengths and the weakness of the new arrangement stem from the fact... Some of the many panels of explanation come close to being trite or even patronising. Yet they are probably needed... casual visitor and the droves of mindless tourists need to be delayed and then detained... At first glance the crowded arrangement looks old fashioned... but there are numerous ingenious touches... Care has been taken to place objects on sloping boards so that they can be clearly seen...'

London Archaeologist, Spring '97: 'The gallery has a modern spacious feel whilst retaining the elegance characteristic of the museum as a whole. All objects are well displayed and clearly labelled with adequately detailed information... This gallery successfully encompasses all possible aspects of money in a clear and comprehensive way which is at once intelligible to the young child and stimulating to even the best informed of adults.'

Museums Journal, 4.97: 'The Museum has achieved a delicate fusion of old and new styles. A lack of gimmicky gadgets will please traditionalists. Time charts on the wall, though old fashioned, are essential to place information in context... The gallery is aimed at the general visitor with difficult terms explained. The labels and panels are exemplary, with a proliferation of colourful maps, diagrams and pictures. The labels are informative, easy to read and there is, refreshingly, not a museum number in sight. The Money Gallery is packed and popular. It is good to see a relationship that works for both partners [HSBC

and BM].'

Other magazines and newspapers

Meridian, 1.97: '... exciting, yet informative... it will fascinate children and adults alike...'

The Searcher, 7.97: 'splendid... fascinating... The exhibits are well lit with good, clearly labelled illustrations, and the gallery's size holds the interest without being overwhelming. A "must see" for any coin collector.'

The Tablet, March/April '97: 'It is wonderfully well mounted, everything clearly labelled and lit, precisely and attractively positioned, at once functional and imaginative. Never for a moment – and this is important for one's comfort and responses – is there the smallest confusion between exhibits and captions: everything works...'

Numismatic press

CCNB Newsletter, 4.97: 'The coins and other items have been judiciously chosen and are well-served by the layout and lighting in the cases... I was also especially struck by the excellent use of illustrations... The labels are also clear and sufficiently informative without being over-long...an excellent gallery... My only complaint is that there are no seats to save one's feet on what will, for the numismatist, inevitably be a long visit!.'

Coin News, 2.97: 'The HSBC Money Gallery is undoubtedly the finest exhibition outlining the development of money anywhere in the world... a superb unparalleled exhibition...'

Coin News, 1.98: '... vibrant and crowded place... A particularly useful resource... is a truly excellent monetary "family tree" showing the interrelation of different types of coinage in an admirably clear fashion... There is occasional repetition within each chronological segment, which would be less obvious if one went down each wall in turn, but the amount of times this occurs is heavily outweighed by the number of times that material in a case on one wall complements material of the same period in a case on the other wall... Introductory Guide contains a simplified time-chart, a useful plan of the gallery, some interesting text and several high-quality colour photographs... Objects are displayed on sloping boards, offering the viewer a close-up view of them and enabling them to be lit from above. Each case has a short and useful introductory text above it, as does each of its subdivisions. Object descriptions are clearly connected with the relevant objects and give much useful information, although I would have liked more information on designers and mint marks... very interesting additional information, illustrations and excellent maps are offered on a sloped band below the

exhibits... The room is well lit by both artificial and natural light and the method of display is a considerable success... there is something for anyone with any interest in money or coinage and... hours should be allowed for a full visit.'

3.5. Conclusions

The HSBC Money Gallery

Overall, the reaction of visitors to the gallery is extremely positive. In the questionnaire survey, visitors described the gallery as 'interesting', 'attractive', 'bright' and 'relevant'. Visitors interviewed individually or in groups were appreciative of the subject and content of the gallery, its appearance, the layout and design of the cases, and the information presented on panels and labels.

Press reviews, both in the national and specialist press, were also overwhelmingly positive. Reviews in national newspapers described the gallery as 'brilliantly conceived' (*Financial Times*) and 'fascinating' (*Independent*). *Coin News* (Feb. '97) noted that 'The HSBC Money Gallery is undoubtedly the finest exhibition outlining the development of money anywhere in the world'.

Access

Efforts have been made to ensure that the HSBC Money Gallery is accessible to most types of users. The majority of visitors found the information presented in the gallery interesting and easy to understand and the objects easy to see. *The Museums' Journal* noted that 'the labels and panels are exemplary', and the *London Archaeologist* that the gallery 'is at once intelligible to the young child and stimulating to even the best informed of adults'. However, specialist reports and group interviews suggested that some aspects of access to the HSBC Money Gallery could be improved. The following practical changes would benefit all visitors.

- Further efforts should be made to attract the visitors attention to the introductory panels. One way to do this might be to replace the existing image on the panels (a Roman *denarius*) with an image that is more familiar and accessible.
- A range of access difficulties could be tackled by modifying the function of the lower panel slopes in each wall case. These currently serve the useful role of providing additional contextual information relating to the subject of the case. This role could be developed. The panels could be used to highlight accessible objects that encapsulate the theme of each case. Their text could be large-format and in 'plain English'. These key items could be highlighted in the case (perhaps with a

symbol) and the panels could carry line drawings of the objects. A modification in the function of the lower panels slopes would: emphasise the theme of the case, which some of the studies in this report suggest is not always clear; assist users with visual impairments, learning difficulties or poor English; help children and wheelchair users who may find the top information panels difficult to access.

- Auxiliary aids could dramatically increase physical and intellectual access to the gallery. These aids must include a large format guide and could also include an audio guide and a simple plain English guide with line drawings. An interactive element to the gallery would also be helpful.

'Successful' cases

The function of an individual case is not necessarily to gain the attention of as many visitors, for as long a period, as possible. Cases that are relatively unpopular in attracting visitors may nevertheless be essential elements of a whole. Having said this, it is clear that some cases in the HSBC Money Gallery attract considerably more visitors than others. The most popular cases are those that visitors find the most accessible. Objects that a visitor recognises draw him or her to a case and from there they are willing to explore other items that are less familiar. This is a normal response both in and outside a museum context: people look for a face they know in a crowd of strangers or become gripped when a television program shows pictures of a place they have visited. One advantage of a thematic gallery like the HSBC Money Gallery is that it can use the accessibility of modern items to shed light on the past.

The position of cases clearly affects how many visitors use them. Cases in the centre of the gallery attracted fewer visitors than those at either end. In addition, cases that relied very heavily on coins for their displays were less popular than those that mixed coins with other objects. Coins in themselves are small, detailed objects that need to be viewed close-up, but do not necessarily draw the visitor close enough to do this.

The island cases, which are intended to 'encourage as many of the passing visitors as possible to stop and look further' are only partly successful. While many visitors pause briefly at island cases, most do not stay to 'look further'. The central case in the gallery (10), which houses a hoard, and the case housing a geometric lathe (16) are good examples of this. The majority of visitors do not stop long enough to read the labels and so pass on with little understanding of the contents of the cases. Perhaps accessible graphics (such as a picture of divers recovering the Salcombe hoard) would attract the visitor's attention to the

labels.

Advertising

Those interviewed either singly or in groups were nearly always unaware of the advertising panel located at one end of the gallery. While nobody would want advertising to detract from the overall appearance of the gallery or, more importantly, from the objects displayed, there is little point in an advertisement that goes unnoticed. If books and multi-media products are to be advertised effectively in the gallery, the advertising should be more prominent.

Gallery leaflet

Those who used the gallery leaflet found it helpful. However, four out of five users of the gallery were totally unaware of the leaflet's existence. This suggests that the leaflet holder needs to be more prominently labelled, and perhaps that there should be a leaflet dispenser at either end of the gallery.

Some visitors who are aware of the leaflet are excluded from using it. These include those in wheel-chairs, foreign visitors, and some visitors with visual impairments or learning disabilities. The preparation of a gallery leaflet in a larger font must be a priority.

Supplementary strategies

The fact that the average visitor who stops in the gallery stops for only 5½ minutes probably does not reflect badly on the gallery; the HSBC Money Gallery is only one of about 100 galleries in the Museum.⁵ However, ways of extending the amount of time visitors spend in the gallery should be investigated. One way to do this would be to provide additional support for visitors. More than half of those interviewed for the report said that they would like to listen to a talk in the gallery. Other types of support could include gallery 'tour' leaflets covering themes like 'money and war' or 'making money' and the provision of 'activity' leaflets for children.

Changes

Changes to the HSBC Money Gallery and planning for the provision of additional auxiliary aids and services must involve consultation with the potential users at every stage.

3.6. Responding to the Evaluation

At the time of writing, the Department of Coins and

Medals is putting in place the second in a series of updates to the HSBC Money Gallery. Many of the changes already made to the gallery are in direct response to the findings of this evaluation. Further changes will continue to respond to this evaluation and to an on-going programme of gallery evaluation. The principal changes made so far are:

- Development of a new introductory leaflet for the gallery. This provides simple information which helps visitors to orientate themselves within the exhibition and is focussed on a small number of key objects.
- Replacement of introductory panels. The new panels carry a more striking image and a reduced amount of text.
- Replacement of existing case numbers with more prominent versions. These can be used to orientate visitors using gallery tour leaflets or audio tours.
- Addition of mounts to raise coins currently in a horizontal position.
- Addition of new, low-level, leaflet holder at east end of gallery.
- Exchange of some banknotes for similar issues (conservation reasons).

The department is also providing an increased range and number of talks and activities in the gallery. In particular, mediated object handling now takes place in the gallery four days a week.

3.7. Key Recommendations for The British Museum

The role of evaluation

Informal evaluation of gallery projects is a normal part of the on-going development and renewal of The British Museum's exhibition space. As the Museum's Head of Exhibitions noted in 1995, '... ways in which we find out about the effect of new galleries are many. They could be described as a corporate learning process... The most important part of the process for us is the constant interaction with the users of the galleries.'⁶ This remains true.

Many museum workers, at The British Museum and elsewhere, have failed to see the relevance of formal research or evaluation of their products. Evaluation has often been viewed with distrust, as something which at best wastes time and money, and at worst demonstrates a lack of professionalism, skills and abilities. Formal evaluation studies of British Museum galleries and exhibitions are important for a number of reasons. These include:

⁵Observation work in other British Museum galleries would place this figure in context. Comparisons with galleries in other museums is difficult because of the varying size and nature of the galleries and the institutions themselves.

⁶Geoffrey House in. J. Cherry and S. Walker (eds), *Delight in Diversity*, British Museum Occasional Paper 118, London, 1995.

- justification of the value of the Museum itself (or of its exhibitions or public programmes);
- information gathering to aid in long-term planning;
- assistance in the production of new exhibitions and programmes;
- assessment of the effectiveness of existing exhibitions and programmes;
- increased general understanding of how people use the Museum and museums in general.

In the present climate of 'accountability', where publicly-funded bodies must *prove* their efficacy, evaluation of galleries and other services should become a more important part of The British Museum's strategy. While this report includes a number of criticisms of the HSBC Money Gallery, its findings are primarily a testimony to the considerable successes of the team involved in the gallery's creation. Pro-active evaluation is a tool that the

Museum can use to its advantage, enabling it to prove the quality of its galleries as well as demonstrating its on-going pursuit of excellence.

Funding evaluation

Detailed evaluation is time-consuming. It is not realistic to expect Museum staff to prepare detailed evaluation reports on (or in advance of the construction of) their galleries. It seems sensible that bids for gallery funding should include provision for professional or partly-professional front-end and/or summative evaluation. The Science Museum devotes up to 10% of the budget of new galleries to evaluation. This proportion seems unrealistic for The British Museum, but a detailed professional evaluation is likely to cost several thousand pounds.

