Social History in Museums

Journal of the Social History Curators Group

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Front Cover Illustration
Lower part of Quarry View Primary School Hanging
(Sunderland Museum and Winter Garden)

The Social History Curators Group

SHCG aims to draw together all members of the museum profession, to promote social history in museums and improve the quality of curatorship.

It aims to:

¥Work with those who are continually developing standards, to improve the quality of collections care, research, presentation and interpretation.

¥Stimulate and act as a forum for debate on issues effecting the museum profession.

¥Act as a network for sharing and developing skills.

¥Advocate the study and practise of social history in museums.

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

The Group organises seminars throughout the year on a wide variety of topics which are a useful resource for member s Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The Annual Study Weekend provides a forum for a fuller analysis of major subjects such as interpretation, evaluation and community outreach.

A *News* is issued several times a year and includes reviews of meetings and exhibitions, opinions on current issues and items of news. There is also a SHCG website and the Group is responsible for the *firstBASE* database.

Social History in Museums is produced annually and is issued to all members. Back issues are available via the Editor. Articles, reviews and books for review should be sent to the Editor c/o Littlehampton Museum, Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 5EW. SHCG does not accept responsibility for the opinions expressed by the contributors.

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Social History in Museums

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Museums, Archives and History: Renaissance and Re–discovery

Stuart Davies

Introduction

This paper builds on a keynote address to the Social History Curators Group (SHCG) Newcastle Conference in 2002. It discusses the significance and relationship of two key programmes initiated under the leadership of Resource (Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries) since its inauguration in April 2000. These programmes — Renaissance in the Regions and the Archives Task Force — are not simply of importance to their domains. They are part of — it is argued — a more general renaissance and re—discovery of history.

Social history in museums

The founding of the Group for Regional Studies in Museums in 1975 and its subsequent re—invention as the SHCG in 1982 signalled the emergence of local, social and industrial history as serious disciplines within the museums field, previously dominated by art, archaeology and the natural sciences. It paralleled a spectacular growth in community and industrial museums — which marked the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these were independent but there was also a growth in local authority branch museums. This increase in the number of museums focused on local, social and industrial history was followed by an increase in specialist curators and by interpretation or education staff who saw the learning and outreach potential of social history collections. The result was that not only did even the largest museums become more accessible in content and presentation to a wider audience but the SHCG grew and grew until by the 1990s it had over 400 members and was the largest specialist group within the UK museums world.

The influence of the Group — largely informally through the networking and debating between individual members — has been truly significant in the development of museums and galleries in the last quarter of the 20th Century. In particular the refocusing of museums philosophy towards people rather than the material or aesthetic virtues of objects has opened up a route to museums as serious vehicles of historical interpretation for all parts of society

and thereby also made an important contribution to   access for all and working with audiences to deliver what people want from their museums. The influence of individual members of SHCG as well as the Group itself is difficult to measure.   But influence it certainly has had.

In England the strength of the Group has always been in the regions. Its original name reflects that. Although it has many active members working within the National Museums and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, it draws much strength from museums — little and large — in the English regions. In part this is of course because we have no single national museum in England which presents and promotes the social and industrial history of England. That may not be a bad thing. But it does mean that it is difficult to achieve a focal point for social and industrial history as a discipline within English museums.   In some ways, SHCG has been a substitute for that weakness — if that is what it is.

Diffusion and fragmentation is a strong characteristic of the English regional museums scene. This has some advantages. We are closer to our users. Closer to the public. Closer to the collections that have relevance and meaning for most people. Closer to local communities and their elected — or unelected — representatives. This closeness has defined the culture of the social historian working in museums since the 1980s: people—orientated; committed to working in partnership with others; understanding the value of knowledge; inclusive and rooted in the realities of people s lives past present and future.

But this strength is also a weakness when it comes to securing resources for creating even more benefits from what we do. Fragmentation was one of the three key weaknesses identified in the Renaissance in the Regions report (Resource, 2001) produced by the Regional Museums Task Force. Lack of a framework to build on good practice and successes, and to allow the focusing of resources in a way that would generate activity that really impact- ed on people s lives and which would then attract further resources was a major impediment to pushing forward with an agenda that headlined the social purpose of museums.   Renaissance in the Regions provided that Framework.

Renaissance in the Regions

 Renaissance in the Regions is Resource s strategy to transform and modernise England s museums and galleries, with a new framework of regional museum   Hubs   set up as centres of excellence in each English region.

At the end of last year Resource endorsed the configuration of regional museum Hubs in each of the nine English regions. These had been submitted following extensive consultation and discussions throughout the regional museum community. Each region has a lead body which will be responsible for administrative arrangements and representing the Hub.

In October, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced that it would be allocating £70 million over four years to support Renaissance. This is less than was requested, but a significant step towards achieving the vision — and is the first ever sustained revenue funding of its kind from central government to museums and galleries in the English regions.

In light of that DCMS funding announcement, the Resource Board has decided to phase the implementation of Renaissance. A Selection Panel was set up to assess the nine Hubs against agreed criteria in order to identify three regions which will receive accelerated funding to fully implement Renaissance in Phase 1 of the project over the next three years. Those three regions are the North East, South West and West Midlands.

Although only three regions will receive full funding under Phase 1 of the project, all Hubs will receive some support for Renaissance objectives and initiatives from Resource in the next three years. In addition, Resource will be channelling significant extra support through the Regional Agencies, including through the £2 million Museum Development Fund, which is specifically aimed at museums outside the Hubs.

Resource has determined priorities for the first phase of Renaissance investment (2003—2006).
They are:

¥ To build capacity in the hubs to enable them to develop programmes which combine high quality scholarship, innovative interpretation and effective technologies to deliver new displays, enhanced collection management, improved access to knowledge and information and a workforce capable of creating a step change in our regional museums.

¥ To create a comprehensive service to schools by top slicing £10m from the Renaissance programme and investing it alongside £2.2m from the Department for Education and Skills. More children and teachers will benefit from museums and their collections that ever before. Our target is to increase contacts between museums and schools by 25% before 2006.

¥ To reach a wider community by broadening the audience for museums through marketing , audience development, and

community—based programmes. Our target is to add 500,000 new users predominantly from C2DE and ethnic minority groups by 2006.

This is a challenging programme. And it is a programme that all museums can have some part in though the burden of responsibility for making a success of this first phase does fall on some more than others. There are opportunities here for everyone. And there are particular opportunities for social, local and - |industrial museums. Well connected into the community, you can make a very important contribution to Renaissance delivery and indeed the shape of Renaissance in the future. Renaissance will evolve as a programme. We will be bidding to government for additional resources in 2004. Renaissance provides a framework for change and a framework to realise our aspirations for museums, collections and users.

And a part of Renaissance is the prospect of developing better links at regional, hub and local level with other domains — including archives, to which I now turn.

Museums and Archives

In the autumn of 2002 Resource accepted an invitation from the DCMS to establish an Archives Task Force (ATF). The remit of the Task Force is very broad — to investigate how archives might be better understood, better looked after and better used.

At the time of writing the ATF has reached first draft report stage, and a number of headline issues and aspirations have been identified. Not all of these need be discussed here but one very clear message has emerged: one way for archives to be better understood, better looked after and better used is for them to work much more closely in partnership with — in particular — museums and libraries. This is not a partnership of convenience — though it is also true that archives as a domain are very vulnerable to expenditure cuts and political isolation and need some stronger allies. It is a partnership of common ground.

That museums and archives are closely related is not a new concept. Archives underpin the writing of history, and history underpins what most museums do and especially social local and industrial history. The importance — professionally — of the relationship was recognised in 1989 with the setting up of The Standing Conference on Archives and Museums (SCAM) by the Association of Independent Museums, the Museums Associations and the Society of Archivists. SCAM s work focuses on building

bridges between archivists and museum curators. In 1990 it produced *A Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom*, the third edition of which was published in 2002. It has also published four information sheets (Collections Policy and Management; Archival Listing and Arrangement; Archive Preservation and Conservation; Access to Archives) and a fifth is in production.

The Code of Practice defines archives thus:

In general terms, archives may be defined as original documents in any medium created and/or accumulated by an individual, a family, a corporate body or institution in the course of its daily life and work, which have been selected for permanent preservation as evidence of purpose, function, organisation and operation.
They may include legal documents such as deed, wills, contracts, etc., minutes, financial records, files or loose papers, letters, diaries, maps plans or technical drawings of all kinds, printed books, pamphlets or ephemera, illuminated manuscripts, photographs, newspaper cuttings, volumes/books of product samples, audio—visual material or computer discs or printouts.
    The relationship between the originator and the documents gives those documents archival significance and intellectual value. The integrity of an archive should therefore be respected where it survives. It should not be broken up, nor should separate items be abstracted.
    Immediately it can be seen that there is a significant degree of common ground between museums and archives.
    Archives commonly found in museums can be divided into four categories:

¥ Records and documents acquired for the museum s collection by gift, purchase or loan, irrespective of their format or medium. This would include, for example, the results of oral history, photographs, film projects and fieldwork commissioned by the museum

¥ Any records deposited in the museum by statutory authority

¥ Documentary material associated with the museum s collections

¥ The museum s own administrative records, files, etc illustrating its history and activities as an institution

    Many museums have significant archive holdings, a fact first properly recognised in museums in the regions when the Registration Scheme was established in 1988 (and prompted the

setting up of SCAM). In 1990 a survey of industrial and social history collections in the museums of Yorkshire and Humberside (YHMC, 1990) revealed that only 27% of items in those collections were objects. 40% were photographs (which have historically been collected by all three domains), 27% were items on paper (ephemera as well as archives), and 6% were textiles. Only seven out of the 22 museums surveyed in detail had half or more of their collections made up of museum objects .

More recently, a national audit of Scotland s museum collections (Scottish Museums Council, 2002) has reinforced the importance of archives within museums.   Collections data for the audit was provided by 170 organisations, including the four national organisations of Historic Scotland, the National Galleries of Scotland, the National Museums of Scotland and the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Garden. Archives and photography together made up 20.8% of all the items held — just over 2.5 million items, nearly 2 million of which are held outside of the national organisations.

But the importance of archives to museums goes beyond simply what they hold. Archives (from any source) can enrich exhibitions and learning and outreach activities. They enable museums to tell more balanced stories than if they relied simply on what the objects say to us. This is especially true in social, local and industrial museums where the three—dimension object is always the poorer for being presented in isolation from the evidence that other sources can bring to an interpretation. All the more welcome too where aesthetics are not a leading driver (although some archival material is beautiful as well as informative).

There are of course issues surrounding the relationship between museums and archives.
The most important ones are:

¥Who collects what?

¥Who is best placed to care for material?

¥Who is best placed to give access to material?

All of these can present problems. And all can be pretty much instantly solved if one looks upon archives and museum collections as different manifestations of the same thing — an artefact that contains knowledge and meaning. By working in partnership we can resolve collecting issues. Collaborations in oral history, for example, can ensure that the necessary resources to create effective strategies for fieldwork, preservation and access can be shared. Skills and facilities (such as conservation laboratories; microfilming, photography and digitisation; learning and outreach

teams) can similarly be shared to the benefit of both museums and archives. Exhibition spaces and research resources can be shared to the benefit of both and to the benefit of users. Users are not bothered who does what; they want the best possible service and working together can deliver just that.

Keeping the customer satisfied is surely at the top of all our agendas. Closer working together of museums and archives will help achieve that. When viewed from the user s perspective the alleged differences between museums and archives simply appear to be nothing more — at worst — than two sides of the same coin. This is why opportunities to either bring collections together — preferably with the local studies collections of public libraries too — or to coordinate activities should be taken. The idea that archives are visited by a relatively small number of people who use them intensively while museums are visited by large number of people who are satisfied by a mediated presentation (usually an exhibition) and rarely — especially where social, local and industrial collections are concerned — want more than that can become a self—fulfilling prophesy and needs to be challenged.

Electronic technology is making remote access to archival holdings much more of a reality. And apart from using archives in exhibitions, they can be mediated in cyberspace. Archive catalogues can be fronted up by interpretations around specific themes which in effect create virtual museums on the web. At the same time more open access stores backed up by digitised catalogues will make the study of social, local and industrial collec- tions a real possibility for more than just the (very few) dedicated academics or enthusiasts (the writers of Shire Albums?) who do so at present. The next great leap forward for genealogy will be to make it easier to trace objects with family associations. And put them in the context of other stuff. It will also enable social historians in museums to at last tackle the problem of preserving and interpreting mass consumer products from the twentieth century in a sensible way, not least of all because products and supporting archives are inseparable parts of the same thing.

The other great area of merged interests is in community history. Community history is the bread and butter of social, local and industrial history museums and SHCG can take some of the credit for having made it respectable in the museums domain. It is also increasingly figuring as a big issue for the archives domain. Many small, community—based organisations, including museums, (small museums are probably the principal target of the SCAM Information Sheets) branch public libraries and community centres (of all sorts) are building up archives. Sometimes it is a creative

process — perhaps, for example, a by—product of reminiscence therapy work — and sometimes a passive process, a home of last resort for the archives of a now defunct local business. Building archives is often a stridently local enterprise — keeping our history here matters to many people. And it is popularly thought that keeping them local is safer because proper archives have selection and rejection policies — not everything is retained.

This is grassroots history. There are now off—the—shelf packages to encourage it, the most well—known being commanet, allowing individuals to create their own archives in an organised manner, regulated by a software package. Whatever the quality of the product (and it is variable) the experience is almost always life enhancing. Participation is the key and the principal social benefits spring from the production process rather than the product itself.

There are obvious linkages to the myriad of museum—based projects which engage the community through oral history, education outreach and off—site exhibitions. Community history really is common ground for museums and archives. It is also — along with a commitment to users, access and learning — part of the common ground between the two Resource initiatives, Renaissance in the Regions and the Archives Task Force. The future of museums and archives seem closely linked and are a key part of Resource s commitment to the cross—domain agenda . Much of this agenda will be advocated and implemented in the regions by the new Regional Agencies. These will be the fora where museums and archives plan together while curators such as yourselves and archivists work together locally to deliver excellent services to new and existing audiences bringing together our respective collections and skills and getting more and more people — young and old — excited and inspired by history.

Re–discovering history

What is all this adding up to? The re—discovery of history. Not alone though. The developments in museums and archives are in themselves important. But they are truly significant when placed in a wider context. We are experiencing a quite incredible revival in popular interest in history. The pioneering work of W G Hoskins in the 1950s set the ball rolling in local history terms and interest has steadily grown. But it has really taken off in the last ten years. The most obvious evidence of this is the number of television programmes with history as their theme. They reflect the growth in interest and stimulate it too. It has made household

names out of a handful of academics — like David Starkey — a phenomenon not known since the days of A J P Taylor thirty or more years ago.

And there is more compelling evidence of the current popularity of history:

¥ History periodicals/magazines have an annual circulation of 1.5 million

¥ There are now 3,000 professional history lecturers in the UK

¥ There are about 1 million members of local or family history societies

¥ Over 2,500 history titles were published by the book trade in the UK last year — 5% of the total

In addition there is the routine use of archival source material in our schools for history examinations and the ever increasing number of school pupils visiting museums and historic houses to enrich the curriculum. This is the world which social, local and industrial museums and archives (which of course — as already noted — underpin most of this activity) now belong to. They are part of the re—discovery of history in this country. The reasons why this is hap-pening would need an hour or two to explore thoroughly. However there does appear to be fundamental desire to locate identity — with a place, family or set of beliefs. And museums and archives help to establish the identity of an individual, a place or a community. Many of us are seeking roots. Museums and archives can be a part of that search. SHCG and its members have subscribed to this for a long time and can be leaders, both in the re—discovery of history and in creating strength and clout by bringing museums and archives together on the common ground they share in collections and potential beneficiaries and users. A shared future will be a better future.

References

Resource, 2001, *Renaissance in the Regions* (London)

Scottish Museums Council, 2002, *A Collective Insight: Scotland's National Audit* (Edinburgh)

Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council (YHMC), 1990, *Collecting for the 21st Century* (Leeds)

Further up–to–date information about Renaissance and the Regions and the Archives Task Force can be found on the Resource website : www.resource.gov.uk

Working Together

Ian Chappell

Portsmouth Museums and Records Service has operated as a joint service since 1994. It was one of the earliest joint services to be developed. We now have eight years experience of working together and have just submitted an Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid to produce a rationalised infrastructure to support the joint service.

The aims are:

¥ to provide high quality collections care

¥ to offer maximum public access to the collections on—site, off—site, and on—line

¥ to keep operating costs to a minimum

In 2002 Museums and Records merged with Libraries and City Arts to form ALMR (Arts, Libraries, Museums and Records).

Background

Until 1994 the Museums Service and the City Records Office developed separately.

Museums

The first public museum in Portsmouth opened in 1895 in the old Town Hall. In 1931 a branch museum was added for natural history and art. In 1941 the old Town Hall received a direct hit in a German air raid. The building and virtually the whole of the museum collection were destroyed.

After the war new collections had to built up. As the service grew, a number of buildings were acquired. By 1994 the Museums Service was responsible for:

¥ six public museums

¥ a museum store

¥ a vast range of monuments and fortifications

The organisation was structured by subject departments in:

- archaeology
- art
- local history
- military history
- natural science
- education
- conservation
- administration
- attendants

City Records Office

Modern Records operated in the Civic Offices — dealing with the City Council s current records. Historic Records operated in the City Records Office, a separate building on the City Museum and Art Gallery site.

Museums and Records were in separate City Council departments and operated totally independently.

In the early 1990s the Museums Service suffered from major local authority budget cuts. Nine full—time professional posts were lost in approximately four years. At the same time, however, the City Museum and Art Gallery (the HQ site) was transformed from a failing museum with very low visitor numbers (13,000—15,000 pa and falling) into a successful museum with a clear identity as the museum telling the Story of Portsmouth . The major focus was changed from decorative art to local history and a broad—based programme of temporary exhibitions. As a result visitor numbers quadrupled.

Amalgamation of Museums and Records

In 1994, the Museums Service and the City Records Office were amalgamated to create the present Museums and Records Service. A new integrated management structure was introduced with five sections:

- Collections Management
- Local and Military History
- Exhibitions and Display
- Commercial Management
- Administration and Finance

A Business Plan with performance indicators is prepared annually, closely linked to the City Council s corporate priorities.

Collections Management

The previous structure was fragmented with each section working in different ways and no co—ordination of collections management. The new integrated team consists of:

¥Collections Manager — responsible for policy
¥Collections Officer — responsible for museum collections
¥Archivist — responsible for records collections
¥Collections Assistant
¥Registrar
¥Stores Supervisor
¥Stores Assistant

   This team has provided substantially improved documentation (to full Spectrum standards), consistent procedures for object movement, inventories, stores systems and control. There are, however, still backlogs of documentation to resolve.
   The aim has been to integrate as much as possible but total integration is not practical. For example in documentation, museum collections are based on documenting individual objects with a unique number. For archive collections the starting point is the collection which is deposited rather than the individual document.

Local and Military History

This section combines the museum subject curators with education. This has produced a more co—ordinated approach which provides a broad range of activities both on—site and off—site. Outreach bas become a major success for the Service. The Local History and Collections teams work closely together.

Exhibitions and Display

The new team is responsible for displays at all of the museum sites and for the programme of temporary exhibitions. Display standards have improved and the temporary exhibition programme has been a major success at the City Museum and Records Office, which has averaged 75,000 visitors per year for the last five years.

Commercial Management

This section combines day—to—day front of house operation of all sites with commercial operations. Income generation has improved significantly.
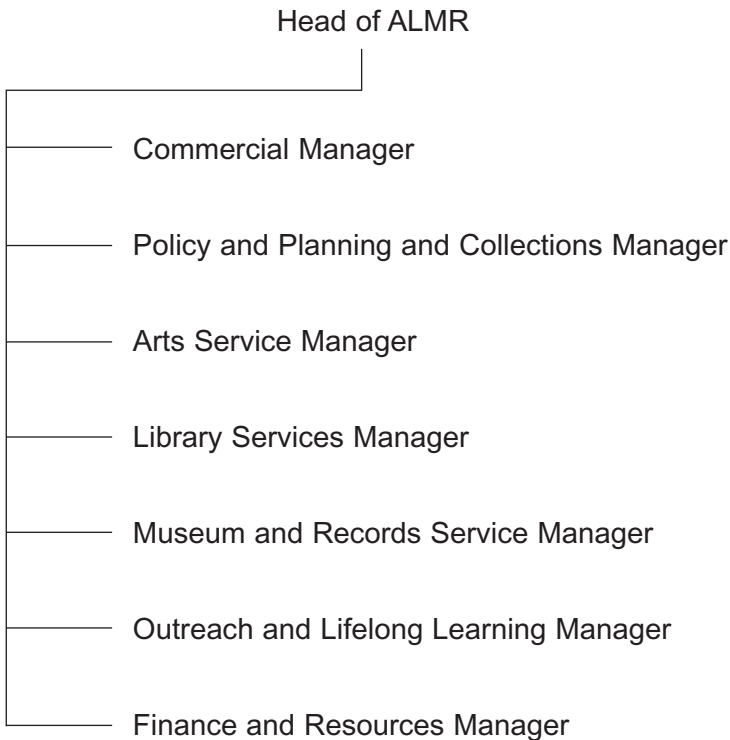
Service Delivery

Apart from the new structure major steps have also been taken to integrate service delivery.

1. There is now a combined education service for both museums and records. For example, a session on Victorian Portsmouth will combine the use of museum and archive resources. There is also a joint programme of events and activities.

2. The public searchroom of the old City Records Office has been relocated into the main museum building. This links it to the local history displays, so that the searchroom and the displays are seen as two aspects of the same local history story, rather than as separate entities. The museum oral history collections are also available to the public through the searchroom.This has proved a major success with the public. There is a much improved awareness of the searchroom facilities and the local usage has increased by 20%. There are however, two practical disadvantages. The searchroom is now separated from the bulk of archive storage due to the layout of the buildings.

   Secondly, there is less gallery space available for display.

3. Progress has also been made on combining public access to museum and archive collections. As a pilot project a Visual Images Database has been produced in—house which provides public access to the postcards from both the museum and archive collection. This has proved very popular and is now being extended to include all of the photographic collections.

Amalgamation with Libraries and Arts

This year integration has moved on a further stage with Museums and Records merging with Libraries and City Arts. The new division is led by the previous Museums and Records Officer. This builds on a number of collaborative projects in recent years.

The new management structure is:

Head of ALMR

Commercial Manager

Policy and Planning and Collections Manager

Arts Service Manager

Library Services Manager

Museum and Records Service Manager

Outreach and Lifelong Learning Manager

Finance and Resources Manager

Early achievements include:

¥ an integrated finance and administration team
¥ plans to develop an integrated multi—disciplinary Local Studies
Centre as part of the proposed development of the City Museum
and Records Office
¥ a joint programme of education and outreach activities

In the longer term there are major opportunities for more integrated working, particularly in areas such as education, outreach, activity programmes and on—line services and for more flexible use of staff resources to deliver City Council s core priorities. The structure will evolve with greater experience of working together.

The Need for Development

The Museums and Records Service has been very successful since 1994 and the City Museum and Records Office has a clearly established identity centred on the Story of Portsmouth . The Service, however, has a number of significant challenges:

¥too many sites
¥resources too thinly spread
¥limited space for education activities
¥buildings not fit for purpose

Three problem areas are critical at present.

1. Natural History Museum

This museum has had steadily falling visitor numbers for the last ten years. The displays are out of date and difficult to update. More importantly, the building has a number of major access problems: steps; stairs; level changes and many narrow doorways. It will not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act in 2004.

2. Museum Store

The museum store is housed in a converted riding school. The building is fundamentally unsuited for use as a store with a closely controlled environment. It is also four miles from the HQ site. This makes public access to the collections extremely limited and wastes substantial amounts of staff time.

3. Archive Store

The archive collections are stored in the old City Records Office building next door to the main City Museum and Records Office. This means that documents have to be regularly transported between the buildings. More critically, the building has major structural problems with severe damage to the foundations.

The Way Forward

Since 1999, the Service has undertaken a comprehensive service review and has used Locum Destination Consulting to assist this process. This has produced a plan to develop the Service for the future to build on its successes and deal with its most pressing problems.

The main features of the plan are:

¥to concentrate as much activity as possible at the City Museum and Records Office site

¥to close the museum store at Hilsea and replace it with a new purpose—built Collections Resource Centre at the City Museum and Records Office

¥to close the Natural History Museum and relocate natural history displays to the City Museum and Records Office

This plan has been scrutinised in detail by the City Council s Best Value Audit and Review Panel over a period of six months. It was approved by the City Council in July 2001 and is now the subject of an HLF application.

Development of the City Museum and Records Office Site

The City Museum and Records Office has an excellent location in Portsmouth with very good public transport links. There is also room in the grounds for major re—development. The old City Records office building would be demolished and replaced with a purpose built three—storey building linked to the eastern end of the present main museum building. This building would be retained but with a totally re—arranged use of internal spaces. The new complex would operate as an integrated whole. It would provide:

¥core displays of local history, archaeology, natural history and art

¥Collections Resource Centre for museum and archive collections with high levels of public access and passive environmental control

¥integrated Local Studies Centre

¥temporary exhibitions

¥Education Centre

¥public study and research facilities

¥base for the Service s outreach programme

Collections Resource Centre

This would house all of the reserve museum and archive collections. Approximately 25% would be accessible at all times in the Display Store and a range of study facilities would be provided. Environmental control would be passive using the principles developed by Arup in the Jersey Records Office. This provides

good environmental control with low long—term running costs and very little equipment to go wrong.

Local Studies Centre

The Local Studies Centre will bring together the local and family history resources from the Museums, Records and Library services to create one centre including:

¥study areas for documents, maps and photographs

¥work stations for microfiche/microfilm and computer study of local and family history records

¥access to museum collections of watercolours, prints and drawings

¥sites and monuments records

¥biological and environmental records

¥oral history collection (at present over 800 recordings and growing steadily)

¥IT access to computerised catalogues of museum and archive collections and virtual museum visits (eg Charles Dickens Birthplace)

¥facility to make arrangements to see material in the reserve/study collections

¥library of appropriate books to complement the primary source material

Displays

Space for display would be greatly enhanced. 1,240 square metres would be available for Story of Portsmouth displays, combining local history, archaeology and natural history. These would incorporate much greater facility for regular change and renewal than at present. 270 square metres would be available for fine and decorative art.

Temporary Exhibitions

A 300 square metre temporary exhibition gallery would be equipped to be capable of accepting major touring exhibitions from national museums and other notable exhibition providers.

Education

A dedicated Education Centre would be included with facilities both for school and college groups and for programmes of lifelong learning activities.

ICT

In order to provide a high standard of information for visitors a wide range of public access systems will be needed. These will range form quick simple access systems providing information on displays, exhibition and where services are located to detailed collections databases available in study areas. Links will be provided to data in the Library Service. Material from these systems will also be available
on—line on the website.

Off–site

Making collections available on—site is not enough to reach all parts of the community. The Museums and Records Service has been developing a range of outreach programmes for several years and building links with the local community. The development of a new HQ site with a modern Collections Resource Centre will allow this outreach service to grow and to make use of a much wider range of museum collections.

LINKING WORLD CULTURES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Projects with Ethnographic Collections in Leeds

Antonia Lovelace

From 1997, when I joined the staff at Leeds, there has been a stronger emphasis on working with a broad range of audiences and local communities, to reflect and promote the cultural diversity in this modern city. Leeds has over 10,000 items of world culture in its collections, and many previous curators of this material, usually known as ethnography , have worked on community projects. We wanted to make the collection more broadly accessible, by renaming the space they were displayed in as the Multicultural Gallery, and staging a series of co—operative displays.

Leeds City Council promotes cultural diversity as a key aspect of a modern thriving city of over one million people. Many public events co—ordinated by colleagues in Arts, Promotions and Tourism highlight the cultural mix and its creativity (for example the Absolute Millennium event showcasing music and dance from the different communities in 2000). Leeds Museums and Galleries wants to reflect and promote diversity for the wider audience as well as for the 5—6% belonging to minority communities. The aim of the first project, called Festival Watch , was to renew our links with the different communities

¥ by attending events and documenting them through photography and acquisitions

¥ by asking for help in making mini displays

¥ by engaging with partners to make larger exhibitions

The first event attended in 1997 was Leeds Carnival, an annual African—Caribbean festival, organised by the West Indian Carnival Committee in Chapeltown. The main parade starts from Potternewton Park, on the afternoon of August Bank Holiday Monday, and makes a circular tour through Harehills Lane, Roundhay Road and Chapeltown Road (Figure 1). A carnival whistle, croched rasta hat, and printed black—power cloth, were bought from stalls in the park. Almost immediately the items were featured with some of the photographs taken, in the 20th century slot in a timeline display series for Phoenix Deferred , the main exhibition on our hopes for a new museum in Leeds. I was shown

around Carnival by Marcia Brown, a local artist who had been engaged to make her own display in the Multicultural Gallery, combining her paintings with her own choice of items from the museum store. Her display took place from December 1997 to April 1998. Later In 1998, a student from Thomas Danby College, Michael Bourne, presented his own items in a display on his Rastafarian beliefs, in the community partnership case in Phoenix Deferred (Figure 2). He was one of two students on a Humanities Access Course at the college, who took up the option of a one—case display instead of writing an essay. I had got to know the course leader, Patricia Farrar, after an introduction from my predecessor, Veronica Johnston. Michael s display slot overlapped with our *Windrush* exhibition.

(Figure 1)
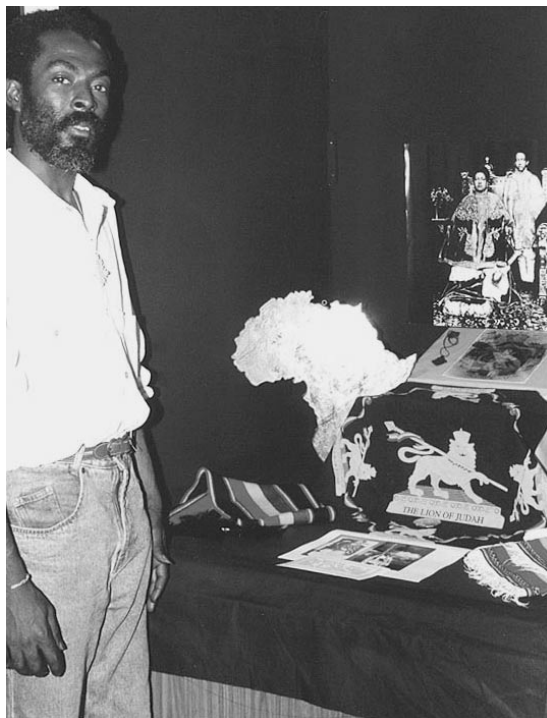
(Figure 2)

All over Britain in 1998 different city councils and arts organisations were celebrating 50 years since the arrival of the ship *Windrush*, which brought the first large contingent of West Indians to help with revitalising the post—war economy.   In Leeds the City Council s Equal Opportunities department spearheaded the celebrations. Councillor Norma Hutchinson, Chair of Equal Opportunities, dressed Jamaican style for the museum s *Windrush* exhibition opening. The museum worked with members of the community committee for the festival, and with other contacts they suggested, to profile the history of the African—Caribbean communities in Leeds, and the topics of Carnival, Domestic Interiors, Natural Products, Souvenirs and Music. In Leeds the West Indies is represented by communities from the islands of Jamaica, Nevis and St Kitts, and Barbados.   A brightly coloured WE LOVE BARBADOS banner was loaned by the Leeds Barbados Association. Aztec themed carnival troupe costumes were lent by Arthur France, the well—known carnival organiser, and Hugh bon—Condor lent his latest winning design, a sea—horse costume. Alford Gardner, who came to Leeds via Southampton and the ship

M.V. Windrush in 1948, was photographed at the exhibition opening, and we paid for a framed copy of the photograph of him that had appeared in the Yorkshire Post. The exhibition was only one of many Leeds *Windrush* events, and by attending some of these with camera at the ready, we got a good range of images for the exhibition, and for future displays.

Other community contacts led to large single—case displays in the Multicultural Gallery. We worked with an Islamic Saturday school, and a colleague in Leeds Libraries Reader Development, to do a display called Eid Mubarak (Best Wishes for Eid) in January 1998. Himalayan Buddhism followed in May (Figure 3), after work with the Jamyang Buddhist Centre in Leeds, and a Tibetan trained painter of Thangkas or sacred paintings, Andrew Weber (who is now based in Cumbria). In October 1998 a display of Hindu Sacred Arts went on show, with input from Leeds Hindu Temple. Children from the temple provided lots of the small clay diva lamps made for Diwali, their festival of light, a large Om sign (Om is the holy sound of Brahma s breath, a symbol of the act of creation), and one girl lent her recently made clay sculpture of the elephant headed deity Ganesha. A teacher in the congregation looked at all the label drafts, and helped with the case layout.

(Figure 3)

A smaller wall display highlighted the Sikh Vaisakhi 300 in 1999, using field photographs and objects acquired during Vaisakhi 1998. The items were bought from a small shop inside the Chapeltown Rd gurdwara or temple. The Vaisakhi procession ends on the Headrow, outside Leeds Central Library, then the home of the City Museum. Pav Chana, a Sikh who works as a technician at the Art Gallery, kindly took me along with his family to another gurdwara (there are six in Leeds). Pav is also a drummer, and he helped with the Eastern Beat drumming workshop in the museum, when classes from three primary schools who were involved in a music project with Leeds Asian and African drummers, came to the museum to see and hear some of our large drums. Pav gave them a demonstration on his own modern drum kit (which they were greatly impressed with). He has since been talent spotted and spent some summer weeks drumming in clubs in Ibitha.

The series on the different religious festivals in Leeds also included a display on Christmas, with a hint of the older Pagan beliefs that underlie it, curated by Jane Barnett, now Community Education Officer in nearby Calderdale (Halifax, Yorkshire). She lent sculptures of the green man , we went out picking holy and ivy together, and we photographed Christmas trees inside different Leeds churches, and the Christmas street lights in Leeds. Later in December 1998 Wayzgoose Morris Dancers were photographed helping to celebrate the winter solstice at the Otley Labour Club, in north—west Leeds (Figure 4). We also assembled a cross—cultural display on Holy Lights, for which a modern Jewish Chanukiah candelabra was purchased from the Leeds Jewish Education Bureau. The museum already had an amazing bronze hanging lamp in the shape of a Hindu temple, and an elaborate multi—figured Christian candelabra from Mexico. High Church sanctuary lamps were borrowed from Temple Newsam House.

In May—June 1999 the City Museum moved out of the Central Library, which was undergoing major service repairs. It was decided that we would not move back into these cramped quarters, but concentrate on the campaign for a new museum, and new store. Our new temporary base is the pilot for this more accessible store, to be run as a resource centre. Many of us had mixed feelings about our temporary move to the edge of town, and it was great to be approached by a Leeds Leisure colleague in Performing Arts, Steve Byfield, with a request to do an African Art exhibition. He had £1,000 available for an exhibition to feature in the Talkin Reality African—Caribbean arts festival he was organising for that September. Although the budget was small we managed to find a free location, at Granary Wharf, an alternative shopping centre

under the arches of Leeds central railway station. The Museums and Galleries technical team agreed to create an informal boundary and support structure of screens, and we renovated existing cases, plinths and lighting supplies for the installation. Support from our visitor services section was also crucial, they managed to put together a rota of visitor assistants to cover the four and a half week period.

(Figure 4)

The exhibition displayed the best of the museum s African items, including masks, sculpture, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, basketry and musical instruments (Figure 5). Alongside was an exhibition by the Leeds Diasporian Stories Research Group (formerly Leeds Black History Group), which detailed the history of African contact with Leeds. We held several joint exhibition development meetings, and got to know each other really well. The festival programme was the main vehicle for the exhibition s promotion, going to a broader audience than the museum had usually reached. The festival launch took place in the exhibition, and the Gambian kora player, Seiko Soussu, who received great applause at the launch, has since settled in Leeds and is available for story—telling and music making sessions. Over 5,000 visitors saw the exhibition, and Marcia Brown led a drawing workshop for pupils from St Leonard s Primary School.

A year later there was a return to the African—Caribbean theme, when Jackie Christie, formerly Community Liaison Officer for the West Yorkshire Playhouse, asked for partnership on a reminiscence project with Leeds Black Elders called From Caribbean Shores . This ran from August 2000 to February 2001. Marcia Brown, the local Chapeltown artist, was involved again. She took photographs of the elders at home with their favourite objects. Jackie recorded short interviews to make a CD. The museum s role was to make a display of some of the objects, and digitised family photographs, at the Frederick Hurdle Day Centre. Together we produced a booklet which juxtaposed text from the interviews with photographs and images of the items. Jackie Christie also interviewed the Chapeltown photographer, John Donne, whose photography business recorded many important life stages and celebrations, for the different local communities into the 1970s. One page from this booklet is illustrated here.

(Figure 5)

The main project in 2001 was an exhibition at Lotherton Hall for the nation—wide Japan 2001 Festival. Sir Alvary Gascoigne, former owner at Lotherton, was head of the UK Liaison Mission to Japan from 1945 to 1951. The exhibition brought together Japanese items from the Decorative Arts and Social History collections as well as those from the Ethnography or World Culture collections.

Story—telling was chosen as the main theme to appeal to a broad age range and to family groups. A Pikachu toy, the best known Pokemon game character, was acquired for the display on Drama, Games and Toys. This Pikachu is now accessioned as a Social History item, in recognition of the worldwide enthusiasm for this game, which has an amazing blend of mythical and modern Japanese characters, who compete in arenas that parallel sumo wrestling rings. A Yorkshire story—teller, Kevin Walker of Bardic Traditions, was hired to recount Japanese tales illustrated by key items in the exhibition, such as the huge dragon vase (Figure 6), and the embroidered panels depicting the story of the Tongue Cut Sparrow. One Leeds couple, Harry and Amanda Lee, who were contacted through a friend then working as a museum volunteer, agreed to lend their wedding photos. They had just got married at the shrine of the Tenrikyo faith in Japan. They put us in touch with Mr Kato who runs the Tenrikyo mission in Leeds, and the mission lent photographs of their main shrine at Tenri near Nara in Japan. Even where a world culture is not represented by a large local community it is usually possible to uncover a series of personal contacts which provide a neighbourly insight. Help from local enthusiasts was also provided by the Yorkshire Bonsai Society, and the Yorkshire To—Ken or Arms and Armour Society.

(Figure 6)

This year the main project is development of an exhibition for the University of Leeds for February 2003, called Africa and Beyond . This features their own anthropology collection, which has been on loan to the city of Leeds since 1964, and will highlight our own connections with the University and through them with Africa, and remake links with nearby secondary school art departments.

Of course linking with a broad range of communities is a job for all curators, not just the curator of World Cultures. Last year the newly refurbished Abbey House Museum ran a varied programme for Black History Month, including workshops with Trade for Change on the theme of Slavery. The Leeds Diasporian Stories Research Group remounted their exhibition in the museum cafe, and began consultations with Kitty Ross (Curator of Social History) to improve the text panel on Leeds and the Empire. Kitty found a photograph of a Barbados born servant at Harewood House, Bertie Robinson, amongst the Edwardian Christmas card collection, and this now features on the panel. Harewood, which lies just to the north of Leeds, is the home of the Lascalles family, who made their money from plantations in the West Indies. This year Sam Flavin (another Curator of Social History) and I have developed jointly a reminiscence box called Making a Life which focuses on African—Caribbean life in Leeds. Crucial input for this came from Maureen Baker of the United Caribbean Association.

Whilst waiting for a new museum our aim, with all our collections, is to provide avenues for all our audiences to explore old and new experiences (Figure 7). Many people are attracted to the life—ways of the Plains Indians, the Japanese Samurai, or the Buddhist Monk, and some pursue this beyond enthusiasm, and re—enactment to a very personal conversion. Bill Ellison, whose Plains Indian collection of over 140 replica pieces was acquired by the museum in 1985, was a Canadian who lived for most of his life in Wibsey, Bradford. For over twenty years he taught himself Plains Indian crafts and beliefs.

The journey theme is being explored as a key link for displays in the new museum, linking collections as well as the visitor experience. This year we are partners with a multimedia website project by Pavilion Arts, documenting Leeds Carnival through the eyes of artists, photographers and two black women writers. By the time we get the new museum in 2007 potential audiences will be used to a huge variety of amazing international entertainment in Leeds. We ll need great partners, and lots of community support, to make the headlines, and bring what is happening out there into the museum.

(Figure 7)

Making Textile Traditions I
Using and Displaying Textiles for Social History

Caroline Imlah

Textile Traditions started out seven years ago in 1995 as a proposed costume gallery for Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery. As *Fashion Works*, Discovery Museum s costume gallery had just opened, Hazel Edwards, my new job—sharer, and I decided to draw up a brief for a textile gallery instead. This was for several reasons: we have a strong textile collection, the local area has strong craft traditions, and Sunderland Museum had an established reputation for using crafts and local practitioners in its education programmes.

The North East of England has a great pride in its traditions — although these are mainly seen as shipbuilding, coal mining, and heavy engineering. To balance this macho image we chose to look at textiles — something fundamental to many women s lives, not just here, but across the world.

We settled on a brief to focus on four textile crafts — quilting, embroidery, knitting, and mat making. We examined not only the role that these crafts played in women s lives and in the local communities, but also why these often difficult and complex skills should now be defined as crafts rather than art. This is due to the feminisation of the crafts — the fact that for centuries many textile skills have been seen solely as women s work for the domestic sphere. Now we had an opportunity to put the record straight and look at the important skills the women of many differing communities had, and honour their unsung contribution to local history.

The gallery contains over 200 exhibits, ranging from rare and important garments to humble household textiles made out of necessity from rags, and contains the highlights of Tyne and Wear Museums (TWM s) textile collection.

The *Quilting* section contains many of TWM s textile treasures — a rare quilted wrapping gown of 1710 — 1750, and two 18th Century quilts. This section relied heavily on detailed object research. The wrapping gown was thought to be a maternity dress, and this would be an even more important dress were this indeed true. However, when detailed measurements for the correct underpinnings were taken by the replica costume maker, Ruth Caswell, Caroline

Rendell and I could see that this was not the case. The lines of the bodice and the way the skirt falls at the waist reveal that this was a tight—laced garment.

It was important for us to show the trickle down of fashions from rich to poor, to show how the patterns and motifs, once used simply as decoration, came to have powerful meanings in our local traditions and folklore.   So we have elaborate 18th Century dresses alongside shepherd s quilts and patchwork bedcovers.

Some of these textiles presented us with very difficult display issues. The small size of the gallery prevented us from showing how these textiles would have been used, and frankly some looked dull without features such as a huge interactive light—box. Often contemporary objects can present more display and conservation issues than historic ones. The contemporary quilt we bought for the gallery, *Waste Not, Want Not*, by Brighton artist Michele Walker, addresses the contemporary food packaging industry, highlighting the marketing ploy of using cosy, traditional imagery to sell highly processed fast food. Being made largely of plastics and photo-copies, this raised a few conservation issues — but decent cases and lighting minimise the risks of long—term display.

The *Knitting* section focuses on ganseys — the navy pullovers worn by fishermen up and down the British coast. Here we looked at the lives and experiences of the women knitters and the fishermen — revealing the need for thrift and skill in hardworking and poor communities. We exhibit a mixture of working garments, and replicas commissioned in the 1970s by the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead (TWM), which managed to preserve some of these dying skills.

The *Embroidery* section perhaps shows best the scope and variety of TWM s Textile Collection, displaying local babywear and samplers alongside rare Greek Island embroideries. The aim here was to show what an ancient, universal and fundamental skill needlework is.

Caroline Rendell cleaned the textiles, and having trained staff and local Embroiderers Guild members, we mounted most of them for display. The rarest item, a Rhodian bed tent, took a lot of effort and ingenuity.

Professional embroiderers produced this amazing textile in the 18th Century for a bride s trousseau. This tent would form the bedroom of a newly married couple in the one—room houses in Rhodes. There are songs about how difficult it was to put up. It took some time to determine the correct size of bed, and the height of the tent. It has a structure like a lampshade beneath it, and is supported with tapes like guy ropes, and an awful lot of polyester wadding.

Robert Carr Bosanquet, a local archaeologist, based at the British School of Archaeology in Athens in the early 1900s collected many of the textiles. Most were deliberately acquired as scraps of embroidered cloth, as dealers and collectors were less interested in the actual garments. We recreated the style of garment some of the fragments were from, in an attempt to give them back their meaning.

The *Mat Making* section is a very popular section in the gallery, as so many local people have memories of this very home—based craft. We have concentrated on rag rugs made by the hooky and proggy method, and chose to display them around an interpretation of a family scene, showing how everybody had their role to play in producing mats.

These humble textiles have given us many conservation and display problems. By their very nature — made of scraps and recycled cheap materials — they are not designed to last long. The dryness and fragility of these quite heavy objects meant that we have had to display them on gently sloping plinths.

Unusually a man, Ben Hall made *Flat Iron* the contemporary rug. Coming from a fine art perspective he produces these a bit like a Pointillist painter would, rather than in true proggy style. The imagery in his work often evokes manual labour, as rag rugs are associated with working class communities. This mat comes from a range that includes pick axes and shovels — but we chose *Flat Iron* to carry on the thread of women s work running through the gallery. Finally here we have joined two communities — that of the local working communities and the art world.

The pride these people felt for their families, their homes, and their communities is now given a significant place in Sunderland Museum and Winter Garden s *Textile Traditions.*

Figure 1
A rare wrapping gown of 1710 — 1750.

Figure 2
The demonstration area, used every Wednesday for craft activities, with the *Mat Making* case and one of the *Quilting* cases in the background.

Figure 3
The contemporary textiles case displaying works by
(clockwise from left to right) Ben Hall, Michele Walker,
Kim Hargreaves, and Jenny Bullen.

Making Textile Traditions II
Using Textiles as a Foundation for Education Activities

Jo Cunningham

Traditional North East textile crafts such as mat making and quilting have featured in the education programme at Sunderland Museum for many years.

Activities have ranged from half—day school workshops to more ambitious projects, which have taken several weeks to complete.

In the tradition of the communities who made textiles out of necessity, the different projects organised by Sunderland Museum all have one thing in common: collaboration.

All kinds of visitors, from the under 5s to the over 80s, have worked along side professional craftspeople and keen amateurs to produce wonderful new textiles. Projects have been organised on small budgets using recycled materials.

Textile projects are devised by the education staff and complement both temporary exhibitions and permanent collections. The popularity and interest generated by these projects and the wealth of Tyne and Wear Museum s collections inspired the creation of a permanent gallery devoted to traditional textile crafts. The gallery, *Textile Traditions,* opened in 2001 as part of a Heritage Lottery Fund museum refurbishment.

Here are some examples of projects, which have taken place at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens.

The Tiger Rug

Based on traditional Tibetan textiles but using a clippy mat technique the design, by artist Ali Rhind, was drawn out onto a grid on the hessian backing. Old woollen blankets were collected from charity shops and specially dyed to provide the necessary range of colours. The mat frame was set up in our art gallery and visitors were invited to take part every Thursday for the duration of the Claws exhibition (about 12 weeks in total).

A textile artist was employed to work in the gallery each Thursday to encourage visitors to take part and to provide technical support.

The project attracted a loyal group of volunteers who returned weekly to contribute to the rug but as the exhibition was held over the summer holidays huge numbers of children and family groups also took part.

The atmosphere in the tiger rug sessions was busy, friendly and welcoming. The completed rug was put on display in the art gallery once complete.

Figure 1
Making the Tiger Rug

The River Wear Map

This project took place in the late 1980s and involved 21 schools: primary, secondary and special. Each school mapped a section of the River Wear using a host of different textile techniques and the whole project was brought together to form an impressive parish map . The project helped the children involved to gain a sense of each other and to identify with their city.

The map toured each school, and has been on loan to the Barbican Centre in London when it formed part of the exhibition to celebrate Common Ground s People s Parish Maps project, before finding a permanent home in the education rooms at the Museum.

Winter Gardens Wall Hanging

This textile wall hanging was made with the children of Quarry View Primary School s Children s University , an out of school club.

Twelve Year 5 children, their teacher and one assistant, visited the Winter Gardens and made sketches of the plants they thought the most eye—catching. With the permission of the gardeners, some of the leaves and flowers were picked and scanned to produce colour images. These images were used as templates. Life—size leaves were cut from felt and painted. Flowers and fish were embellished with beads and sequins for the finishing touches. The simple background was painted with graduating shades of blue.

The children involved in this project were familiar with the Winter Gardens and the project was completed during two half—day visits.

Textiles are included in the National Curriculum and can be a way in which to encourage school visits.

Figure 2
Quarry View Primary School Hanging

A New Leaf

This project used the Winter Gardens and Textile Traditions gallery as a stimulus for a textile piece where many different textile techniques, from batik to hooky mat—making were employed.

Several older people worked with artist Gaynor Devaney to design and make a wall hanging. The participants used digital cameras as well as sketchbooks to record images and create mood boards which they then used to inform the design. Old and new skills were put to use on this wonderfully colourful collaboration.

What are the benefits of textile projects?

Projects such as these are great ice—breakers and help to engage the visitor.

They provide a forum for discussions on many topics and visitors want to talk about their own memories and experiences. The completed communal textiles can be of remarkable high quality which often surprises those involved, leaving the participants with a real sense of achievement.

Encouraging adult learners and volunteers

Organised craft sessions for adults have always been very popular and a needlework self—help group became established in the 1980s. The Museum Quilters continue to meet in our education rooms weekly, and contribute to life of the Museum in many different ways i.e.

¥Provide highly skilled volunteers to give demonstrations and to run textile family fun and school activities.

¥Make handling items for the Museum s hands on collection and textile gallery.

¥Work on special projects for display e.g. The Museum s 150th Anniversary quilt.

Developing audiences and widening participation

Textile projects work with people of all ages and abilities.

¥Some techniques are easy to master, no previous experience is necessary and good results can be achieved in a short space of time.

¥A textile project can be set up in a small space and requires little more than a seat, table and a good light source and basic materials are cheap and easy to come by.

¥Textiles provide a non—threatening way in which to engage visitors as most people have some kind of first hand experience of making textiles in a domestic setting.

¥There is a commonality of experience across many ethnic groups.

Projects can encourage repeat visits and new volunteers.

What are you waiting for?

Banners - An Annotated Bibliography

Nick Mansfield and Karsten Uhl

Introduction

This introductory section will outline a few essential books on the different categories of banners which UK curators are most likely to encounter. It then lists - with occasional annotations - other books under the headings of banners in general, church banners, conservation, iconography, gender, popular art, politics, Ireland, Australia, North America and Europe. A longer list is available from the People s History Museum, which includes a comprehensive conservation section and more obscure overseas sources which have been omitted from this bibliography.

The recent study of banners owes most to the work of the late John Gorman, a left-wing designer, turned amateur historian. In the late 1960s, he rescued trade union banners from obscurity; recording hundreds of them in offices and on demonstrations, arranging for many to be deposited in museums and curating the first exhibition of them at Whitechapel Art Gallery. Alongside the contemporaneous History Workshop and Oral History movements, Gorman s efforts were influential in changing and moulding the course of social history in UK museums, which heretofore had shown little interest in banners. His book, Banner Bright - An Illustrated History of Trade Union Banners, first published in 1973, is still the standard work on the subject and since it also pioneered research on their makers, is the first port of call for curators dealing with historic banners of all types. Gorman s collection of photographs and notes was bequeathed to the People s History Museum after his death in 1996.

Many museums will have banners from the Co-operative movement in their collections and Thalia Campbell and Mervyn Wilson s Each for All and All for Each: A Celebration of Co-operative Banners provides a useful short illustrated guide to this category of material. Hazel Edwards Follow the Banner, is an illustrated catalogue of the collection of the Woodhorn Colliery Museum, backed by original research on the debates which took place in Northumberland miners lodge minutes on the iconography to be used. As such it is a handy guide to mining banners which are found in many museums in coalfield areas. Helen Clark s Raise the Banners High is an ambitious large format book, which displays all of the important Edinburgh City collection, which is particularly strong in early nineteenth century radical and trade society

banners. Nick Mansfield s Radical Rhymes and Union Jacks is an analysis of these latter categories of banners, using the resources of the National Banner Survey, based at the People s History Museum. It is virtually the only guide to nineteenth century political banners and also summarises current academic debate about popular politics during the age of Reform. Also still available from the People s History Museum is Karen Thompson s useful conservation guide for curators, Taking Care of Banners.

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There is a banner bibliography and banner collections listing by Hazel Edwards on firstBASE, which can be accessed through the SHCG website http://www.shcg.org.uk General Enquires to Steph Mastoris on firstBASE@shcg.org

Digitisation - The Cumbrian Experience

Elizabeth Mullineaux

The Cumbrian Digitisation Project is called The English Lake District - A Living Landscape. The project aims to digitise three thousand images from Cumbria County Council s Local Studies Libraries and Record Offices. These images (or a large number of them) are then to be made accessible on the Internet via a purpose built website, along with forty minutes of digitised audio material.

The funding has been provided by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF), which allocates lottery money to education, health and environment related projects. Our project is one of many NOF Digi projects which have an educational remit. The aim is to extend access to the images to a wider, and hopefully more diverse audience. Few people have any idea of the wealth of images and other material held by the Cumbria County Council and other organisations, and even fewer actually come into the offices to use it. The NOF Digitisation projects will be brought together using the People s Network (a project to connect all public libraries to the Internet) and dedicated portals to channel Internet users towards the newly available on-line material.

The project has received roughly £90,000 funding from NOF, and £30,000 from Cumbria County Council. A Digitisation Assistant and Project Co-ordinator do all the digitisation work in-house. This is in contrast with many other projects, such as the massive digital image bank developed by Manchester City Library, where private companies off-site do all the digitisation.

This article will look at some of the practical issues of digitisation project, focussing on the equipment, the workspace and the day-to-day running of the project. It will also take a brief look at the hopeful outcomes of the project in May 2003.

Equipment

The basic piece of equipment being used is a digital camera - a Fuji Finepix S1 Pro. It has so far produced excellent images with a minimum of problems. It is quite user-friendly, and on the occasions it has been taken outside, the batteries have lasted for over 300 pictures.

There are advantages that the digital camera has over a conventional scanner. The camera does not expose the original image to the same intensity of light and heat as would a scanner. This is particularly valuable in a project such as ours, which

involves producing digital images of material such as old and delicate photographs. The camera also copes with originals of various sizes, rather than being confined to the A4 or A3 scanner size. Experimentation has started with taking images of Ordnance Survey maps, but this is in its early stages. Most importantly, the digital camera takes images instantly, with only a few seconds of download time if working directly onto the computer.

A recent visit to the University of Edinburgh digitisation unit revealed that they were using a variety of digitisation processes. These included capturing images with the Fuji Finepix, but also with camera with a scanning back. The results from the camera with the scanning back are of a higher quality than the ones from the standard digital camera, but at a cost of £12,000, and with an image download time of six minutes, this equipment would have suited neither the Cumbria County Council budget nor time-scale.

The computer specification for the project had to supply fast machines with large amounts of RAM to enable the images to be manipulated easily. (To this end the machines are 1.4Ghz with 512 DDR). Large monitors with flat screens were necessary to enable image quality to be adequately assessed. However a large hard drive was not required as the data is stored directly onto a departmental server and backed up onto tape.

Regarding software, the computers are running Windows 2000, with the camera shooting software supplied by Fuji, and Adobe Photoshop Elements (which came with the scanner) to manipulate the images. This is not the full Adobe Photoshop programme, but the functions available are sufficient for what is required.

Although the camera is the main tool, there is a flat bed scanner for scanning glass plate negatives and lantern slides. Quite a lot of money had been earmarked for the scanner, but the price difference between A4 and A3 scanners meant that a top-of-the-range A4 scanner capable of scanning transparencies cost £300, whereas a standard A3 scanner was £1200. There would be few images an A3 scanner would be needed for, and being able to scan transparencies was a priority, so an A4 Epson Perfection 2450 Perfection was purchased.

There are quite a few original transparencies being used for the project, including negatives of the Keswick s Abraham postcard series and some unusual colour lantern slides. The lantern slides presented an unusual problem. The chemical deterioration of the images had resulted in rather pink images, which were not very appealing to the eye. However, if scanned as a negative then inverted in Adobe Photoshop, the resulting positive image was much more natural, and closer to how it would have appeared

before degradation.   The question was whether to produce the image as it was now — pink — or to revert it to the more natural shade.   Opinion was mixed, but in the end it was decided that the users would prefer to see a natural image to a bizarre pink one, and so the lanternslides were scanned as negatives and reverted back to positive images.

A pair of Bowens studio lights supplies the flash lighting for the digital and the 35mm cameras.   The cameras are mounted on a Kaiser stand on the work bench, and the lights are arranged on either side casting a flash across the original.

The final important piece of equipment is the 35mm camera. This is a Nikon F65, with a Sigma 50mm Macro Lens.   The main aim of the project is to create a digital record of the collections, but there is the question future access and the possible deterioration of electronic data.   So that a permanent record of the collection remains even if the digital images are rendered useless in the future, a photograph is taken on 35mm film of each image.   The developed film has an undetermined life expectancy, but will be stored in cool and dark surroundings.

Work space

There are many important factors to be taken into consideration, such as space, lighting, security against possible theft or other hazards such as flooding. In Cumbria s case, the choice boiled down to only two areas within the library at Carlisle, one of which could not be effectively secured.   The project is thus housed within the Local Studies Collection itself.   About six filing cabinets were moved away to provide an area of floor space in which to install a desk, two workbenches and the studio lights.   The area is cool, verging on cold, which is good for the images but bad for the staff, and there has been a previous incidence of flooding. However the area is secure, and there is a locked cabinet in which valuable equipment and archives are stored.   The cameras have to be locked away even if staff are absent for just a few minutes as the area adjoins the public section of the library.

There is an absence of natural light, which means that once the overhead fluorescent lights are turned off, the settings on the equipment remain fairly standard.   As the workspace is within the Local Studies Collection, access to a huge amount of material has been instant, and image selection has been simplified by simply working through the material, filing cabinet by filing cabinet.

Day-to-day running

The work plan is as follows:
The images are selected for digitisation, subject to their content (eg - are they interesting?) and their status regarding copyright. Modern images taken by a source other than Cumbria County Council are avoided, as these cannot be mounted on the Web without permission. Some collections of material have been digitised even though they are still within copyright and I am currently trying to obtain permission to use them. Image selection was a minor consideration time-wise whilst images were being taken from Carlisle Local Studies Library. However, now images from other Local Studies Libraries and Record Offices are being selected, which poses a few more difficulties. For a start, only take a limited number of images can be taken away for digitisation — usually in the region of 100 or 150. This means the process is more selective, and mindful of the images already digitised from previous collections to avoid duplication. The librarians and archivists also do not like material to be removed for very long, and the aim is to return the original images within a week or ten days. In a county like Cumbria this can result in a lot of driving.

Once the images are selected, reference numbers are allocated. All images from the Record Offices have unique reference numbers, but Local Studies material often has a class number but no individual reference, which is subsequently created.

The equipment is then set up, with the image being laid on the Kaiser stand and a light meter being used to set the correct flash on the studio lights. Any plastic or melanex sleeves are removed from the image to prevent unnecessary reflection. If the image is very bent, a piece of non-reflective glass can be placed over it to allow the camera to focus correctly, but this does add a granular texture to the resulting image, whereas reflective glass produces strange reflections. If the image is mounted on blue card (as many are) Blu-Tack is used to stick the card to the stand.

From the computer, the camera settings are checked (such as using the fluorescent one setting to compensate for fluorescent light in the room), the picture is taken remotely, and is saved directly into the appropriate folder.

After about 50 have been taken, the cameras are swapped over and the 35mm camera is installed. The process is repeated (without the PC), changing the light settings to suit the changed format. The images are photographed and the order in which they are taken is recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. This can then be printed out and given to the appropriate librarian or archivist, along

with the developed negatives, as a finding aid.

Going back to the resulting digital images from the camera — these are saved in two different formats. The first is the original uncropped image saved as a TIFF file. This is a lossless format which means that as the image is opened and closed and manipulated, it does not loose any information, whereas the lossy formats, such as JPEGS, lose bits of information each time they are used. As this image is uncropped, it records details such as the physical state of the edges of the original. The size of the original can be discerned from the measurements visible on the Kaiser stand. The problem with the TIFF file is that it is very big - about 10MB (five floppy disks worth of information), and so is very unwieldy and the computer takes quite some time to open and manipulate them.

The second image is a Jpeg file, and these are created in batches. Folders of Tiffs are selected and compressed into Jpegs, which are then cropped to provide a pleasing image with minimal rough edges or expanses of sky. The Jpeg will be the image used on the website, and will also be available through the database for internal use by Cumbria County Council.

The database has been built in-house with some consultation with the website designer. It is needed to help organise the images into a usable system, and to record the metadata. Metadata is merely information about each image, and various standards are being introduced to try to regulate the manner in which this information is stored.

The Dublin Core standards were used when developing this database, which outline 16 fields that ought to be used to describe digital material. This means that the database can be used for in-house image retrieval, but as it complies to the standards for putting data onto the Internet, it can be used for driving the website.

The fields contained in the database are as follows:

Record number - automatically entered by the database
Reference number - unique number allocated by staff
Title - brief title of the image
Creator - the photographer/engraver/publisher/artist
Notes - was originally a description field for internal use
Description - information about the image or image subject which will appear on the website
Jpeg hyperlink - clickable link to the Jpeg image
Tiff hyperlink - clickable link to the Tiff image
Web tick box - to be ticked when records can be made available

online

Publisher - in this instance, images are being published on the Web by Cumbria County Council

Contributor - used to denote which library or record office supplied the image

Date of capture - important in quality control to monitor batches of images which may need reworking

Type - what the original format was e.g. photograph/drawing

Format - how the digital image has been captured e.g. Tiff taken @ 2304x1536 pixels

Identifier - file path to find image - not so important with hyperlink fields in place

Language - the language of any script associated with the image, largely irrelevant

Relation - relationship to any other material

Place ID - place name field for image

Place ID questionable - a field introduced by the web designers for searching purposes

Coverage (date) - obsolete date field (superseded by date from and date to)

Rights - to record copyright status of image

Jpeg width - will be filled automatically

Jpeg height - ditto

Year from - first possible date of image

Year to - last possible date of image

Dates approximate? - whether or not date known to be accurate

There is also a subject dropdown box available for each record which can contain as many or as few relevant subject terms as the image requires. The dropdown list of terms was first developed from the thesaurus created by Cumbria Archive Service for their Cairs archive management system. However, this seemed too academic, and the current list of terms was developed from looking at the images themselves. The list can be amended and added to, and checked for anomalies and unnecessary use of similar terms.

Finally, the website is being developed by an external designer, and is in its fairly early stages. Due to having been part of a consortium, the first computer driven database was designed around a tiny database of only six fields and six columns, resulting in 36 cells to be divided between three of us. This was clearly unacceptable and so we embarked on producing a static page website, the pages of which we would create ourselves using a template provided by the web designer. However, we have now

agreed that the website will be run with our existing database which currently holds over 1,600 records.

Searching will be available via subject terms, keywords, place names and date. The results of searches will probably be displayed with thumbnails which can be clicked to view the image page. This will be contain the image at about 500 pixels high, plus the description, date and possibly other information plucked from the database.

This website will in certain respects be a short-term outcome of the project - with Cumbria County Council being committed to maintaining the website for a minimum of three years. However the project will also produces a large image database for in-house use, has digitised a significant number of images for long—term preservation, and has furnished the Council with both the equipment and the expertise for digitisation to continue into the future.