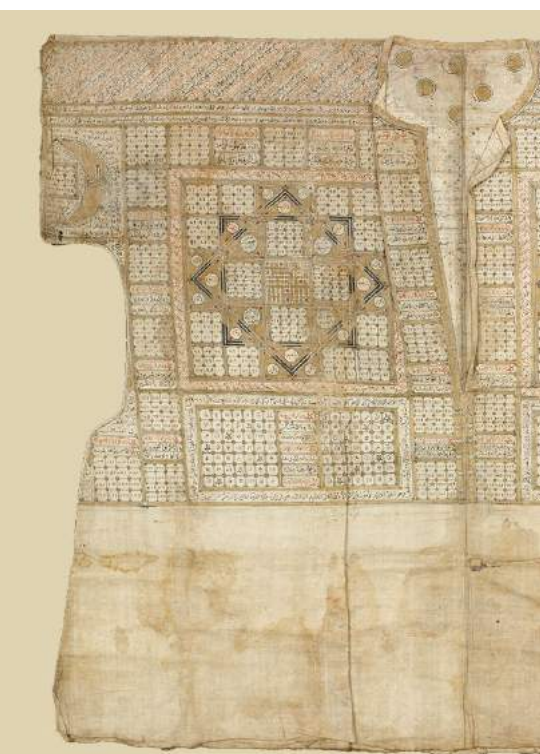


# John Ellerman Foundation

## Museums and Galleries Fund

A report by Virginia Tandy and Dan Watson  
January 2019

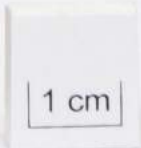
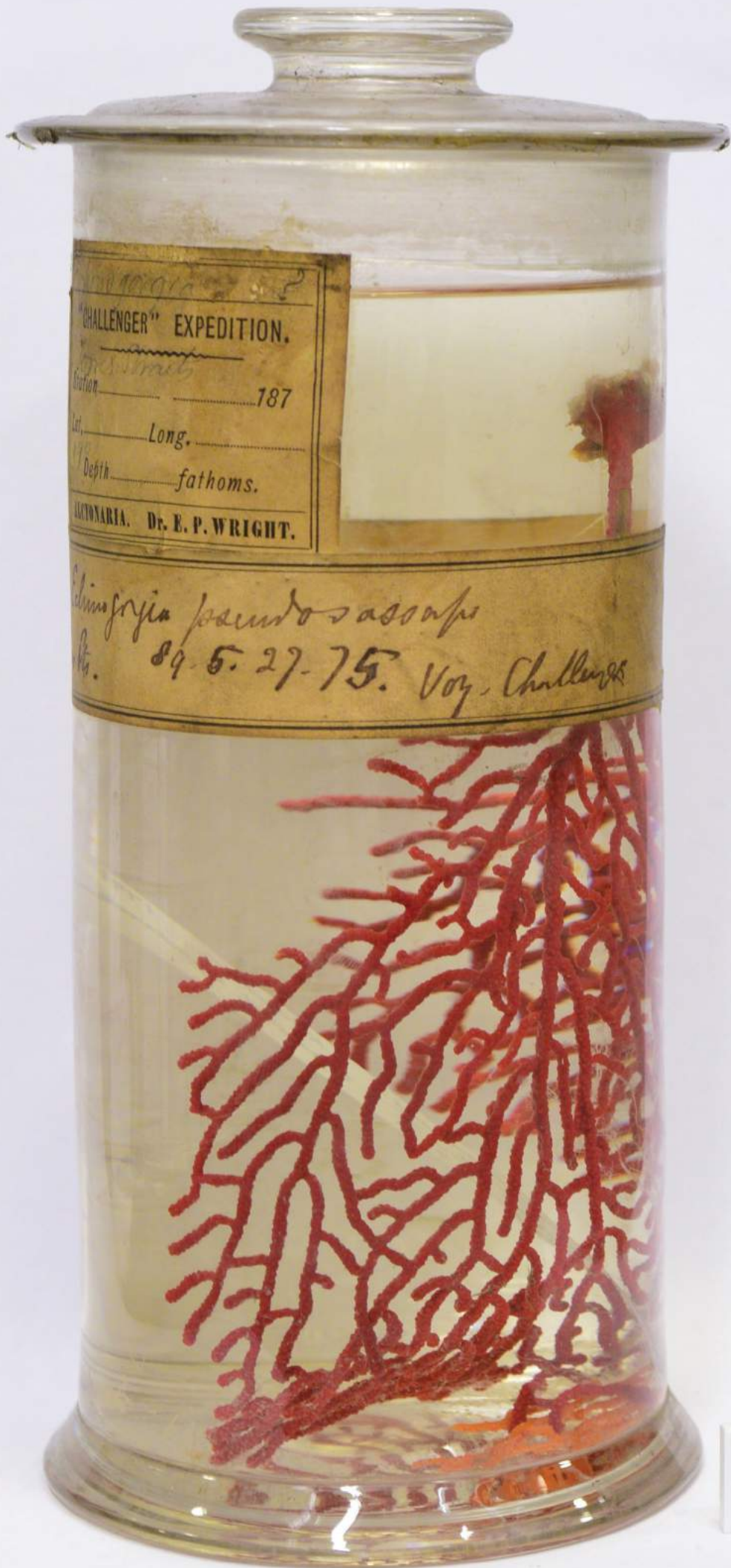




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Coral (*Echinogorgia pseudosassapo*) gathered by the HMS Challenger expedition, September 1874, Cape York, Australia.  
Natural History Museum, London. © National Museums Liverpool & Natural History Museum



# 1. Foreword

The John Ellerman Foundation, in existence for now approaching half a century, is a responsive funder whose current aims are to advance the wellbeing of people, society and the natural world. We do this by making grants in three categories – Arts, Environment and Social Action – to charities across the United Kingdom whose activities we consider to be of national significance.

In 2014, as part of a new grantmaking strategy, we set up the Museums and Galleries Fund as an arm of our Arts funding. Museums and galleries are places where people find inspiration in arts and heritage. We believe they can provide the conditions that stimulate creativity, artistic expression and regeneration. Historically we had found no difficulty in giving grants to the great London-based cultural institutions, as well as to a number of local museums that hold ‘nationally significant’ collections. What was becoming increasingly clear – and a challenge to us – was that the latter were suffering disproportionately from a sustained period of financial austerity, adding to the pressure on them to appeal and provide access to ever-greater numbers of visitors. Reports suggested that in many of these organisations morale, confidence and numbers of staff were dropping, with core curatorial functions being neglected.

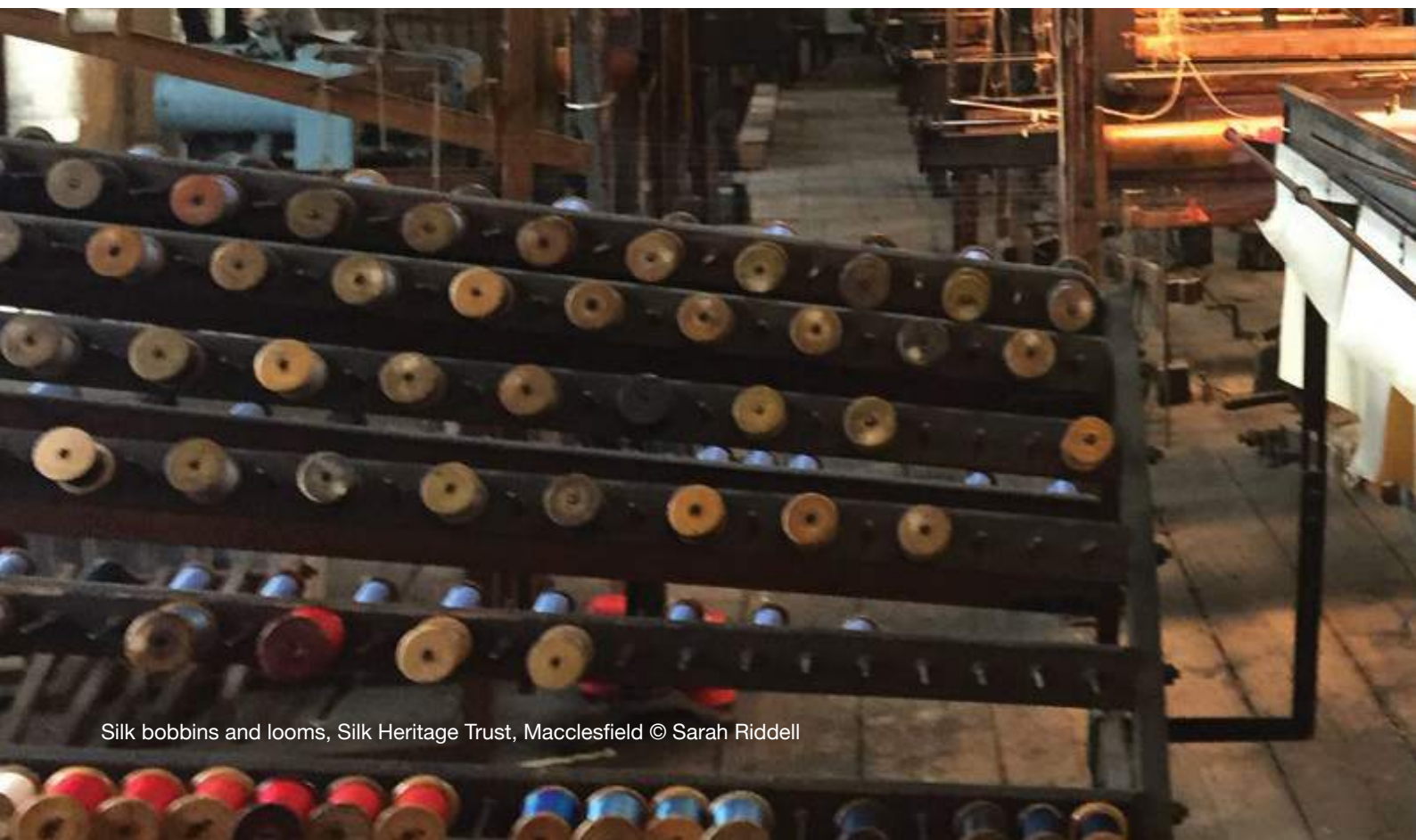
Independent foundations, such as ours, have the opportunity, and responsibility, to react to changing circumstances and, where there is a good reason, to fund against the grain of current trends. We decided to take soundings from a number of key players in the field with a view to tailoring a discrete fund to direct what help we could to a range of museums outside London. With no wish to duplicate what other funders were already doing, informal consultation took place with individuals in leading institutions (eg Art Fund, ACE, Museums Association, Association of Independent Museums) as well as with other experts in arts charities, foundations and museums. We remain hugely grateful to all those who generously gave their time and advice. What came out of those early conversations was the positive steer to focus on the critical role of the curators themselves and their development as the most effective means of injecting a boost into the sector at large.

Without a curator a museum has no function. Today’s curator has multi-faceted responsibilities that stretch way beyond the original meaning of the word as someone who simply ‘looks after’ or ‘manages’ a collection. In some

people's minds there may still be an image of a back-office curator, either in a pair of white gloves poring over a fusty object, or protecting precious items from the potentially harmful effects of wider access, but this notion of curatorship is clearly outmoded. In addition to physical collections care, a curator's role may now involve a multitude of activities from academic research, publication, interpretation and mounting new exhibitions, to partnerships, involvement in specialist networks, education, outreach and using digital technology. Just as the role of museums is evolving fast so curators are finding new methods of linking the objects in their care in ways to engage more deeply and directly with their audiences.

There are several features of our Fund that make it something of an experiment for our Foundation. In the first place it has an annual application window (rather than being open throughout the year). Second, we were anxious to capture the impact of our grants on both curators and institutions and to share those findings with interested parties; so evaluation was built in from the start. Also, in an unusual move for us, we appointed two outside consultants to guide us: Virginia Tandy (independent Arts and Heritage adviser) and Caroline Collier (then a member of the Tate's Executive Group). By focusing on a particular area of interest we hoped to discover what difference we might be able to make, while remaining true to our responsive values as a grantgiver which concentrates on core costs and organisational development.

In the last five years Trustees and staff together have made some, occasionally epic, journeys from one end of the country to the other visiting all the short-listed organisations. We have been given generous access to both the front of house and behind the scenes of some of the most fascinating buildings and cultural organisations in the UK; and met some of the most dedicated and inspiring people in their fields of work. What we have learned by seeing



and listening has extended beyond measure our grasp of the issues and our understanding of the challenges faced by the sector. Virginia Tandy has interviewed all past and current grantees, and this report covers the outcomes of those interviews and the findings on the lifetime of the Fund so far. We are also grateful to Dan Watson for his help in shaping the report and undertaking additional interviews with 13 selected grantees. The inevitable variety in such a diverse range of projects (some completed, some on-going) compounds the difficulty of comparing and contrasting, but our conclusion so far is that there are some strong themes emerging that merit wider discussion and thought.

With the publication of this report we are aiming to shine a light on the value of investing in the skills and development of curators themselves as the dynamic heart of a museum and to encourage other funders to consider their role in supporting curatorship. We would like to thank both Virginia and Caroline for their ongoing wise advice and hard work. I should also pay tribute to my Board colleagues for the enthusiasm with which they embraced the original concept of the Fund; their continued engagement and support have extended its life from a three-year pilot to now its sixth year of funding. We were delighted to find our growing enthusiasm for what was an experimental project was endorsed by the learning and positive findings from the evaluation.

Above all, we owe a debt of gratitude to all our grantees and applicants whose willing cooperation and gift of time and knowledge will ensure that, by shaping our experience, others in the world of museums may benefit in the future.

**Sarah Riddell**

Foundation Chairman 2011-18





Installation of *Ghost*, a painting of Stubbs' *Whistlejacket* as a unicorn, in Clifton Park Museum, Rotherham as part of the 'Going Public' project, © Museums Sheffield



## 2. The importance of curatorship

There is an appeal in the slogan ‘everyone can be a curator’, as there was in Joseph Beuys’s declaration ‘every human being is an artist’. Not everyone is a great artist or a great curator but it is fun – and important – to feel free to try.

For me, a skilled curator is able to draw on knowledge, intuition and insight to bring about the possibility of new meanings and fresh perspectives, whether on objects, works of art or any material or collection, however ineffable. Curating is a creative activity. There is no ‘neutral’ curating – all curators take a view and have a voice – but some are more prone to argument than others. It could be said that resonant exhibitions almost always propose an argument or take a position.

The perception may be that nowadays ‘everyone who compiles is a curator’, as the art critic and historian Hal Foster put it in his review of publications on curating (*London Review of Books*, 4 June, 2015). Yet a recent survey carried out for the Art Fund by The Museum Consultancy for its report *The 21st-century curator* found that 77% of respondents believed that the role of the curator was not understood by the public. These tendencies may appear at first paradoxical. However, if everyone who organises the contents of their bathroom cupboard considers that they are curating, perhaps it follows that the understanding of and respect for the professional skills involved in being a museum curator might diminish accordingly.

A piece in *Forbes Magazine* online, *The 5 Key Roles of a Killer Curator* (6 November 2014) by Steven Rosenbaum, author, filmmaker, and curator, promotes the creative impulse of curatorship:

“Curators are creative – but they create by mixing sources and voices, often including their own. All curators need a voice. A passion to create. Curation is the art of creating something new, coherent and meaningful out of an abundance of related information and ideas. Great curators find unusual linkages and insightful connections.”

Rosenbaum may not be writing primarily about museum curators but I think that he describes some of the qualities needed, and present, in imaginative museum curating.

I believe that curating is above all the art of being bothered. A tendency in excellent curating that I have witnessed is the apparently almost unreasonable efforts that the curator will make to secure a particular object for a collection or a display if they feel it to be essential. Where someone else might opt for a substitute, or give up – the curator will not rest until they have tracked down that particular piece, or have installed it in the way they believe to be right, despite objections. Tenacity is admirable but it can be bewildering to other hard pressed colleagues.

And what of knowledge and research? There is a sense in the curatorial profession today, that the core purpose of a museum curator is either felt to be ‘opaque’, or seen by the public, and sometimes by museum colleagues, as being about gathering (and even hoarding) expert knowledge and therefore curatorship is disregarded as irrelevant. Not surprisingly, then, the Art Fund Report recommends stronger advocacy for the curatorial role. Research and building knowledge about collections, and preserving them for future generations, two of the traditional skills in curatorial practice, are sometimes considered to be in opposition to those skills highly valued in 21st century curating – communication, collaboration, connection – and the creativity and the personal dimension described by Rosenbaum. It is as if acquiring knowledge through research is illicit or luxurious, something done in universities, or possibly in national museums, but by a regional museum curator to be carried out despite the demands of the day job, if at all.

There is an understandable sense of unease felt by some curators at a time of cuts to public funding resulting in fewer curatorial roles, and more, sometimes conflicting, demands on those left – as well as a tendency towards valuing general as opposed to specialist knowledge (particularly but not exclusively in local authority museums). This prompted the movement The Campaign for Good Curatorship, led by Dr Tim Ewin of the Natural History Museum. In a recent piece in *The Guardian* entitled *The Secrets of the Museum Curator*, Lucy Worsley, historian, Chief Curator at the Historic Royal Palaces and one of the most media-friendly of museum professionals, defended research and expertise as being valuable in a fast moving environment: “Curating isn’t just a matter of taste. It involves building up real knowledge of the items in your care. As the world gets quicker, and shallower, and bite-sized, retaining our ability to take a deep dive into history is more and more important.”

Good curating has always been linked to clarity of thinking and communication. Today, there is an added pressure to be more transparent about how and why decisions about acquiring and displaying collections are made – instinct is valuable but choices need to be explained. Excellent curatorship, at least in public institutions, has always been many faceted. The internationally renowned curator Hans Ulrich Obrist has described curators as facilitators and catalysts. Alongside and informing his practice, he has carried out groundbreaking research into the history of exhibition making that has cast new light on the discipline of curating. I think that many of the insights in his book of interviews with leading art curators, *A Brief History of Curating*, (2008) are applicable to curating most kinds of collections (for example, collections of molluscs or textiles or fossils, where their significance needs to

be communicated) as well as to works of art. In one of the interviews, Obrist recalls the influential curator Harald Szeemann (whose aim as an exhibitions maker was to create a ‘Museum of Obsessions’) describing the varied duties of “the one who puts on an exhibition” as “an administrator, amateur, author of introductions, librarian, manager and accountant, animator, conservator, financier and diplomat.”

Many beleaguered curators might recognise this list of roles, and be able to add to it. A problem today is that curators may be expected to carry out many duties all at the same time, some of them unrelated to exhibition making, with little choice or agency. And the value of research and specialist knowledge is under recognised. The sharing and pooling of knowledge between experts is a positive response to cutbacks but if everybody is a generalist, what will there be to share? I think we need to take a fresh look at how deep knowledge and the passion of individuals can be supported, not as the right of the specialist curator in larger institutions, but throughout museums of different types and scales. National museums have a strong part to play in sharing knowledge, and collections, but it would be sad (and retrogressive) if specialist knowledge became the preserve of national museums rather than dispersed, like the myriad collections, across institutions.

Paragons, then, are needed as curators – scholar/project managers who are inspirational, efficient, humorous and collaborative, storytellers who are able to make connections between objects, between institutions and between people, who are confident enough to reveal their processes and to co-curate with communities. But in reality, how can excellence in curating be nurtured and developed at a time of constraint, when many curators feel demoralised? The Ellerman Foundation started with the belief that curatorship is vital and set out to encourage imaginative ways to foster and develop it. The Museums and Galleries Fund has since 2014 supported all those strategies recommended in the Art Fund Report: championing curating, fostering communications skills, encouraging succession planning, supporting networks, knowledge sharing and professional development – demonstrating that excellence in curating is fundamental to lively, distinctive and relevant museums.

Good curating is based on the knowledge and passionate curiosity that sparks the flame of interest in others when communicated. After all, exhibitions are a form of communication. Deep knowledge is not in opposition to access but is fundamental to it – this is even more powerful when research is gathered from a range of sources (valuing different perspectives and different kinds of expertise) and is shared and communicated with imagination and generosity. The hybrid role of a curator as catalyst, acquiring knowledge AND sharing it in ways that appeal to the widest possible public, is innovative, exciting – and creative, as demonstrated by the approaches discussed in this publication.

### **Caroline Collier**

Advisor to the Fund



Wooden bath shoes inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Turkey. Late 19th century, Courtesy of Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester, Image © Michael Pollard

## 3. Executive Summary

### Origins of the Fund

“Good curating is based on the knowledge and passionate curiosity that sparks the flame of interest in others when communicated.”

**Caroline Collier**

Museums and galleries are a local and accessible means for people to engage with arts and heritage. Many hold important collections which have the power to inspire creativity, motivate artistic expression and stimulate local regeneration. Over the years, however, they have faced increasing challenges from public funding cuts and underinvestment. While this has had an impact on all aspects of their work, there seems to have been a particular loss of curatorial skills, with a consequent hollowing out of the professional capacity and knowledge that are key to unlocking the value of these collections.

These concerns emerged as part of the John Ellerman Foundation’s research and consultation which informed its grantmaking strategy. The findings prompted the creation of a new Museums and Galleries fund. Set up in 2014, it aims to strengthen museums and galleries outside London, with a focus on enhancing and sustaining curatorship to improve collections management and find new ways to attract and engage the public.

Museums and galleries come in many forms and sizes. They may be independent charities, run by local authorities, in a process of transition from local authorities to independence, part of universities or large national institutions. Altogether they are home to a rich variety of collections – from molluscs and archaeology to social history and fine art.

The Fund responds to the complexity of the sector by supporting both those institutions that are embarking on new projects and those struggling with the difficult public funding environment. Some applications have been prompted by new developments, such as the need for intensive collections work as part of a major capital project, while others have focused on significant collections that, due to restructures, retirements or redundancies, no longer have any dedicated specialist curatorial staff.

In the five years of the Fund, the Foundation has made five or six grants annually for periods of up to three years. It has provided £2.7m to 31 organisations, with the average grant around £86,000. The six grants announced in June 2018 are included in the numbers but are not described in this report, as work has yet to begin.

## Method

As a new approach, evaluation by an independent consultant was built in from the start. The experience and analysis of the first 25 recipients where work is underway forms the basis of evidence in this report, with the evaluator charting trends and developments from an annual assessment of the projects against objectives. It also draws on a workshop convened by the Foundation of a group of four grantees and their partners who were all using training and networks to improve curatorial skills, and includes reflections from additional interviews with individuals from 13 of the funded organisations, selected to represent the variety of work supported.

Six themes emerge from the work, and provide the structure for this report. The Foundation hopes it will serve as a reference point for other organisations with an interest in supporting curatorial work, by presenting different models of developing curatorship.

Even five years in, it is still early days, with only some of the grants complete and many with some way to go. There are already, however, some strong and consistent experiences and messages, albeit with much still to come.

## The funding ecology

As a public good, museums and galleries rely on significant public funding from central and local government. Both sources have been under pressure during the years of austerity, and these cuts follow a longer-term trend of those funds which were available being directed to education, outreach and new business models. While all these elements are vital to a thriving and successful museum or gallery, the latter emphases have distracted attention and investment from the heart of an institution – that is, the collections it looks after, both now and for the future, and the knowledge, experience and skills to understand and open them up to the wider public.

Local authorities are essential to a thriving museums and galleries sector outside London, either running their own institutions or acting as a key source of funding for others. However many are under increasing financial pressure. Arts Council England (ACE) took over responsibility for supporting museums in 2012, first funding 16 Major Partner Museums and in 2018 adding 66 to its National Portfolio funding. Funding for Subject Specialist Networks is ACE's only dedicated investment in curatorial skills.

The Heritage Lottery Fund may support curatorial posts as part of a capital project or a time-limited heritage grant, but since the last round of its Collecting Cultures scheme there is no funding programme dedicated to developing collections work.

Among independent funders, only a few provide revenue funding, often for short-term projects with specified aims – such as the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, administered by the Museums Association, for work which uses collections for a social purpose, and the Pilgrim Trust’s partnership with the Association of Independent Museums which makes small grants for object and preventative conservation. The Art Fund initially provided bursaries for curatorial travel and research and two traineeships. In recent years its New Collecting Awards support acquisitions and associated professional development, and the Weston Loan Programme provides grants of £5,000-£25,000 for local museums to borrow from national collections.

## The John Ellerman Foundation’s Fund

This Fund is unusual in focusing specifically on multi-year support for core curatorial work in museums and galleries outside London. It also allows organisations to apply for a grant to support their own curatorial priorities in the context of their own circumstances, rather than construct projects in response to a specific approach identified by the funder.

The Fund has two other special features. First, applicants do not have to be accredited museums; some successful applications have been for collections with no previous professional stewardship. In these cases grants were used to work towards or achieve accreditation or similar recognition of the collection. Second, they are not required to have their own collection; the focus is on developing and strengthening curatorial skills with a benefit for the public, however that is to be achieved.

With new territory comes uncertainty. It was unclear at the start whether there would be sufficient demand. There was also a concern that the Fund might be perceived as pursuing an academic or elitist seam at a time when people were struggling with what could be seen as the more pressing problems of austerity. This was mitigated by a strong emphasis on the work funded having both a public benefit and a legacy within and beyond the organisation. The detailed criteria can be found on the Foundation’s website.

## The grants: themes and impact

The funding criteria give wide scope and flexibility as to eligibility and purpose of any funding. For some, the main focus was their own institution, while other initiatives involved highly structured networks. Grants were made to a wide range of types and sizes of organisation, and for a rich variety of collections. A full list is published as an appendix to this report and on the Foundation’s website.

From within this variety, the report identifies six themes. The groupings are not mutually exclusive, as several grants could be placed within more than one category, but they capture the primary drivers for the work and how funding has supported curatorial skills in different contexts:

- **Organisational development.** The largest group, with seven grants. Work included supporting local authority and other museums through change or a redevelopment, ensuring knowledge retention through succession planning, achieving recognition of the importance of an individual collection, strengthening management and building long-term relationships with private collectors.
- **Leadership in geographic areas or fields of specialist expertise.** Of the five grants in this category, three had a geographical focus (Cumbria, the South West and Northern Ireland), with two seeking to share their specialist experience (in one case molluscs, in the other military history).
- **Links with capital projects.** Three grants were made in the context of imminent or hoped-for investments, all of which have proceeded. The curatorial dimension also brought considerable associated benefits, through partnerships with other institutions, volunteer engagement and wider networks.
- **Digital initiatives.** Two grants were for specific initiatives which aimed to unite dispersed collections through a single website, both highly successfully. Two other grants included significant digital outputs in the form of dedicated websites, providing a single access point for collections – one across a region, and the other opening up specialist collections in six cities in the UK.
- **New models of curating.** Many of the grantees are experimenting with new approaches to curation with four grants focusing specifically on this. Two involved interesting new opportunities for the curators themselves, with the two others using innovative ways of involving local people in commissioning work, curating and interpreting collections.
- **A deeper understanding of collections.** Four grants enabled the exploration and fuller understanding of the significance of four highly individual collections, including filmmaking, geology, Islamic art and the legacy of the 'Basic Design' teaching method in art schools.

## Outcomes from the grants

The grants led to a spectrum of outcomes, with three main types being most significant across the six themes: those for curatorial skills themselves; a multiplier effect within the museum or gallery as a whole; and impact beyond the institution. These show how investing in curatorial skills can be transformative in other areas.

- **The core curatorial benefits mainly relate to individual skills and knowledge.** They include early career or trainee staff developing their own skills, opportunities for existing staff to flourish and develop through new responsibilities for management and collections, and deeper knowledge and understanding of collections. There was also noticeable, greater capacity to disseminate and share this knowledge.



- **Increased curatorial activity helps build organisational resilience.**

This came from leveraging further funding for capital developments and programmes, increasing loans and acquisitions and generating innovative ways of engaging volunteers and local communities.

- **The benefits of curatorship extend beyond the museum.** Sharing knowledge and skills across geographic and thematic networks gave the core institutions greater status and reach, which was enhanced by the development of new academic partnerships and other expert relationships. These activities also served to reinforce the wider reputations of the funded organisations.

## Conclusions and next steps

The focus on core costs relating to curatorial skills for up to three years drew an enthusiastic response, demonstrating that the Fund is filling a gap in the types of funding available to the sector. Demand has varied year on year, but has considerably exceeded the budget available, with 277 applications translating into just 31 grants, a success rate of 11% (1:9). For our regular grantmaking the success rate is much higher, hovering around 30%, a further illustration of the tough competition for the Fund.

As ever, the unforeseen is as interesting as the anticipated direction of travel. Perhaps the most significant finding is the case for the importance of that “under the bonnet” work of curatorship – often quiet, unfashionable and eschewed as academic or arcane – which both keeps collections alive and makes them accessible and engaging to the wider public. A determined focus on valuing the collections at the heart of museums and galleries and the staff that care for them and open them out to the rest of us brought considerable wider benefits. Interestingly, those institutions which placed the greatest value on curatorial skills were also stronger on involving volunteers and the wider community.

“John Ellerman Foundation is flying the flag for curation in a way that no other funder is.”

**Beamish Museum**

This report shines a light on the value of curatorship in museums and galleries. The results from the work funded illustrate that the impact can be transformational – showing benefits to individual curators, the collections and the institutions themselves. Taken together, these findings present a powerful case for further investment in curatorial skills and knowledge.



Advanced Apprentice, Reuben Thompson working on the build of the Bounty launch, Courtesy of National Maritime Museum Cornwall © Kirstin Prisk

## 4. Introduction and context

### Funding ecology

The Museums and Galleries Fund was launched in 2013 to support curatorship in museums and galleries outside London. Curatorial jobs and skills were under threat due to reduced funding from local authorities, creating financial pressures and reductions in staff numbers in many institutions.

Among major funders, Arts Council England (ACE) took over responsibility for supporting museums following the abolition of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in 2012, and inherited the coordination of the final tranche of investment into regional museums from Renaissance in the Regions. Initially ACE offered revenue grants to 16 museums in recognition of their strategic role. They were known as Major Partner Museums, and this title distinguished them from ACE's existing portfolio of arts clients. This funding was added to museums' existing income and was offered for a range of purposes often linked to leadership, marketing and income generation, and in some cases support for regional development services for museums. A further five museums were added to this group in the 2015 funding round. In 2017, ACE took a new approach by adding museums their existing national portfolio of revenue clients, and expanding the number funded to 66. The Subject Specialist Networks, also funded by ACE, is their only dedicated investment in curatorial skills.

The Heritage Lottery Fund may support curatorial posts as part of a capital project or a time limited heritage grant. However the lottery distributor currently has no specific funds for developing collections work, as its Collecting Cultures scheme which supported acquisitions and specialist training has now closed.

Among independent funders, only a few provide revenue funding for staffing costs and this is often for short term projects. The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, administered by the Museums Association, provides grants in line with the MA's Museums Change Lives strategy, for work which uses collections for a social purpose, and to enhance the public benefit they can deliver. Pilgrim Trust provides some museum-related grants and directs other funding through partnerships – such as that with the Association of Independent Museums for object and preventative conservation through grants of up to £10k.

The Art Fund initially provided bursaries for curatorial travel and research and two traineeships. Its New Collecting Award offers grants of £50-80,000 for acquisitions and associated professional development, supported by a number of individuals and trusts, including the Esmée Fairbairn, Wolfson, Vivmar and Ruddock Foundations and the Headley Trust. The Art Fund also runs the Weston Loan Programme, which provides grants of £5,000-£25,000 for regional museums to borrow from national collections.

John Ellerman Foundation's Fund is therefore unusual in focusing specifically on multi-year support for core curatorial work in museums and galleries outside London.

The government's Action Plan for supporting museums in England, published in October 2018, includes the Mendoza Review's priority of 'dynamic collection curation and management' as a key ingredient of a flourishing museum.

## About the Fund

The aim of the Museums and Galleries Fund is:

“...to help strengthen museums and galleries in the UK. We want to help organisations enhance and sustain curatorial development to attract a broader public.”

In the five years since 2014, The Foundation had made five or six grants annually for periods of up to three years. The Fund has supported 31 organisations, with combined funding of £2.7m, and the average grant size has been about £86,000. The six grants announced in June 2018 are included in the numbers but are not described in this report, as work has yet to begin.

The Fund gives priority to work that has a legacy within and beyond the grantee organisation. Preference has been given to applications that enable new ways of working with collections (both for established curators and those just starting out), or that ensure organisations are able to safeguard and advance curatorial skills through a time of development or change.

The Fund is open to any museum collection and, to date, support has been given to visual and decorative arts, archaeology and social, military and natural history collections. Applicants are expected to demonstrate excellence in their field at a national level, along with national significance, usually through a unique or high-quality collection or the strength and innovation of a curatorial idea.

Most grants from the Foundation (across all its funding streams) are to organisations with an income of between £100,000 and £10m, though larger institutions, such as nationally funded museums are supported if they are uniquely placed to meet the Foundation's aims and plan to work in partnership with smaller institutions. Local authority, independent museums and contemporary galleries without permanent collections are eligible to apply.

A particular feature of the scheme is that accreditation is not required; indeed, for some the Fund has been a route to gaining accreditation.

**Any organisation applying must be able to demonstrate the following:**

- an emphasis on the value of curatorial skills;
- proven experience of and enthusiasm for working in partnership;
- a commitment to excellence and innovation;
- strong leadership and commitment from senior management, board or governing body;
- effective financial management;
- the difference a grant would make, to the organisation, the general public or other audiences.

The Fund does not support projects focused solely on education and outreach work, or individual conservation projects (though conservation work may be included as part of a wider request).

## Pressure on curatorial skills, particularly outside London

The applications received and grants made give a picture of a richly varied museums and galleries sector, from substantial city-wide institutions of regional and national importance, to small local organisations serving urban, rural and coastal areas and their communities. Despite these differences, they share many common traits.

Chief among these is a reduction in local government funding. Heightened financial challenges have affected spending priorities, in some cases resulting in early retirements, redundancies or reduced hours for curators, and often reducing available funding for training, development or trainee recruitment.

Recent reviews have also pointed to the detrimental impact of the loss of curatorial skills. The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report 'Countries of Culture' (2016) included evidence of a growing problem with the loss of curatorial skills in museums and galleries outside London, driven primarily by local authority spending cuts. Giving evidence to the Committee, Neil McGregor, former Director of the British Museum, cited the example of Birmingham Museums Trust, which is home to an important coin collection, but could not afford to replace its resident coin expert. He said:

“That resource cannot now be used usefully by the museum because it does not have the scholarship and the knowledge.”

In its conclusions the report stated:

“The cultural sector is facing serious skills challenges and we are concerned about the impact of the loss of curatorial and development roles.”

The committee recommended that national institutions, Major Partner Museums and National Portfolio Organisations should have, as a condition of their funding, a requirement to support training and skills development in other institutions.

In November 2017, the Mendoza Review of Museums in England reported similar concerns. This highlighted once again, among other issues, the impact of declining local authority support for many museums, arguing that institutions needed to diversify income streams. It recommended a new framework for national museums’ collaboration with non-national partners. The report referred to museums “struggling to make best use of their collections due to inadequate storage and expertise”.

In 2018 the Art Fund and Wolfson Foundation published a report on museum collecting today to mark the fortieth anniversary of their joint funding programme. Despite the undisputed value and importance of such initiatives, the report issues a stark warning about the longer impact of insufficient and constantly diminishing funding by both central and local government, and the ensuing low staff morale in many museums and galleries. The report’s author, Professor David Cannadine, issues a passionate and urgent plea to “increase investment in their curators and in their collections.”

A further area of concern is the impact of Brexit and new immigration rules, which could affect early career curators. In a submission to the Culture, Media and Sport committee, the Museums Association stated:

“We are highly concerned that the possible introduction of a strict new visa system which includes minimum earnings requirements will have a damaging effect on the museums sector... Many posts would not meet the existing minimum salary requirement for Tier 2 visas of £35,000 p.a. In addition, a growing proportion of the museum workforce is freelance, and would not qualify for entry.”

## About this report

Against this backdrop, the Foundation made five annual rounds of grants for museums and galleries to undertake work to improve and develop curatorship within their organisations. With the fifth round of grants approved in June 2018, it is a good moment to share what has been learned so far from the first 25 recipients, where work is already underway. Their stories provide an account of vital investment in curatorial skills in museums and galleries.

Ongoing evaluation work, commissioned by the Foundation from an independent consultant and former museum director, Virginia Tandy, tracked the experience and learning over the years. Virginia also made an important contribution to monitoring the progress of the Fund overall and responding to changes in direction where needed. This report draws on evidence from progress reports from grantees, the evaluation of the work funded (some completed, some ongoing) and interviews with a selection of individuals involved with the projects.

The evidence points to the value of investment in curatorial skills in realising the potential of collections. The findings demonstrate that this knowledge can also be a driver for other benefits to an organisation's culture, business model or civic role. The Foundation's findings therefore serve to strengthen the case for increased investment in curatorship.

Labels as part of the 'Mollusca Types in Great Britain' project, © Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales / Natural History Museum



Miss Dillman  
with the kind regards of  
the author.

RECOLLECTIONS OF WORDSWORTH

AND THE

LAKE COUNTRY.

BY

ROBERT PERCEVAL GRAVES, A.M.,

*Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal.*



## 5. Method

This report draws on the evaluator Virginia Tandy's yearly assessments of the funded projects. She obtains updates on activities through interviews with key staff and reports annually to the JEF board on their progress. Her analysis of the progress of the work funded, its aims and objectives, and the developing outcomes, form the basis for the findings detailed here.

Alongside the evidence from Virginia's updates, the report uses material from site visit reports compiled by JEF staff, trustees and advisors during the grant applications process. It draws on notes from a meeting in November 2016, when the Foundation convened a group of grantee organisations to discuss their work focusing on training to improve curatorial skills. It also includes reflections from additional interviews with individuals from 13 of the funded organisations, selected to represent the variety of work supported. Taken together the data provides in-depth insights into the impact of the grants on individuals, on the collections they work with and the way they are understood and experienced, and on their organisations and the communities they serve.

Virginia's findings demonstrate the links between the different uses of the funding and the resulting outcomes. Each grant has a unique story. In line with the Foundation's approach of being a responsive grantmaker, the open nature of the programme allows for the delivery of a wide range of projects testing different approaches. All applicants had to meet a set of criteria – all in support of curatorial skills – but each initiative has developed in its own way. For the purpose of this analysis, the grants have been grouped into themes. The groupings are not exclusive, as several grants could be placed within more than one category, but they capture the primary drivers for the funded projects, showing how funding has been used to support curatorial skills in different contexts.

The use of the themes to group grants, as shown in section 6, provides a basis for analysis and a structure for this report. It is intended to serve as a reference point for other organisations with an interest in supporting curatorial work, by presenting different models of developing curatorship.

The stories of the funded projects are varied in the scope and context of the work undertaken. They provide useful testimony for any museum or gallery, funder or other potential partner interested in what can be achieved by investing in curatorial skills.

The Museums and Galleries Fund makes grants annually. While the first cohort of grantees have all completed their funded work, at the time of writing others are still relatively early on in their progress. Consequently, there are differences in the amount of information available between the grants, and in many cases this report can only indicate emerging findings. There is still much to learn from ongoing and new projects.







Quilt made by volunteers from an original fragment at Joe the Quilter's cottage, © Beamish Museum

## 6. Grants: Themes and Impact

This section describes the grants supported through the Fund. The application criteria allowed for a good deal of flexibility in what recipients could do with the funding, so a range of approaches have emerged. For analysis the grants have been clustered into six thematic groups. These are:

### **1 Organisational development**

- Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool
- The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent
- National Maritime Museum Cornwall, Falmouth
- Orkney Natural History Society Museum
- Watts Gallery, Surrey
- Silk Heritage Trust, Macclesfield
- Museums Sheffield

### **2 Leadership in geographic areas or fields of specialist expertise**

- Metropolitan Arts Centre, Belfast
- Bristol Museums
- Lakeland Arts, Cumbria
- National Museum Wales
- National Army Museum, London

### **3 Links with capital projects**

- York Museums Trust
- Bowes Museum, County Durham
- Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk

### **4 Digital initiatives**

- Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter
- National Inventory Research Project, University of Glasgow

## **5 New models of curating**

- Beamish Museum
- Turner Contemporary
- Tate Foundation
- Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums/Laing Art Gallery

## **6 A deeper understanding of collections**

- Leeds Museums and Galleries
- Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums/Hatton Gallery
- Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton
- Manchester Museum

### **6.1. Organisational development**

Seven grants addressed issues of resilience or organisational development through support for curatorial skills. Some of these projects sought directly to improve or strengthen organisations going through challenging circumstances and times of change – most typically due to cuts to funding from local authorities and loss of skills. Others looked to curatorial skills development as a means to unlock other opportunities, such as leveraging funding from other sources, raising curatorial standards, developing their civic role or their field of specialist study.

#### **Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool**

(£135,000 over three years, awarded March 2014)

Blackpool was Britain's first seaside resort and is rich in cultural heritage. Founded in 1911, the Grundy Art Gallery has become an important centre for the arts in the North West. The gallery is one of several sites owned and managed by the local council (others include the famous Blackpool Tower and Ballroom, and Winter Gardens). At the time of the grant's award, the Council had committed to a regeneration plan with culture at its heart, and minimised cuts to the cultural budget. One of the aims of the grant was to support the development of additional sources of revenue.

The work programme, while led by the art gallery, provided professional curatorial management across all the local authority's collections through the appointment of a Collections Officer. This role was created to review the location and storage of the collections, improve collections documentation procedures, achieve formal accreditation of the collection from ACE and help secure the collection's future. During the life of the grant, the value of the post was recognised and it has now been made permanent.

## **The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent**

(£81,110 over three years, awarded March 2016)

The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (PMAG) in Stoke on Trent is an important cultural resource for its six towns, whose communities face a range of disadvantages. Currently run by the council, it has experienced financial challenges in a climate of reduced local authority funding. Its curatorial staff had reduced from 16 to six, with increased responsibilities for those remaining; at the time the application was made, the Principal Curator was also the Curator of Archaeology and Social History. With five members of the team over the age of 50, it was also important to secure the future curation of the museum's regionally and nationally significant collections.

This grant in support of succession planning for curatorial skills enabled PMAG to employ an Assistant Curator (local history), providing additional capacity for collections management, research and public engagement. Over the three years of the grant, training, development and mentoring will support the appointee to secure professional accredited curator status, via the Associateship of the Museums Association.

## **National Maritime Museum Cornwall, Falmouth**

(£95,172 over two years, awarded March 2016)

Built in 2003, the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, in Falmouth, is home to the National Small Boats Collection. With 150 boats of many classes dating back to the 1860s, including some that are still in operation, the collection is a vital resource in the preservation of Britain's maritime heritage. As well as preserving and displaying boats, the museum's work includes maintaining a national register of historical craft. There is also a workshop where boats are restored and conserved, and replicas created. Volunteers make an important contribution to both the archive and in the workshop. Funding pressures at the museum have led to reduced capacity and necessitated a doubling up of roles. For example, the Director is also the Senior Curator.

The grant aims to help prevent the loss of historical small boat curatorial skills, which are highly specialised but in decline, and funds the recording and documenting of small boats at risk in the South West and further afield. The money funds two new posts – a Curator of Boatbuilding and an Advanced Apprentice in historic vessel conservation. The Curator's role is to improve professional standards and progress the small boats database to meet accreditation standards, while the Apprentice is both developing his own boatbuilding skills and supervising volunteers working on conservation and restoration projects.

“I came to this role cold, with no previous curatorial experience, but it was a really good match for me. I was from a maritime background and had been ‘hobby-boating’ quite seriously for years. I had also done jobs in front-of-house positions within museums and had really enjoyed working in the sector. This role brought two passions together, and curatorship is a fantastic career path.”

Olie Crediton, Trainee Boat Curator,  
National Maritime Museum, Cornwall

**Orkney Natural History Society Museum**  
(£75,078 over three years, awarded March 2017)

This museum hosts collections on a range of themes including the nearby Skara Brae Neolithic site, the scuppered German fleet at Scapa Flow, Arctic exploration, wildlife, fossils and historic household objects. The trustees understand the collection's national significance and were keen to develop a volunteer-led organisation by employing a team of paid staff.

This grant funded a new team to conduct a full audit of the collection and develop an online catalogue, enabling the collection's national importance to be formally recognised and so open the door to funding from the Scottish government and other sources. The Collections Development team comprises three part-time posts of 0.4 FTE (two days per week) each: a curator, a museum officer and an exhibitions assistant. This reflects a way of life in the Northern Isles, where people often have multiple occupations, dating back to when crofting was the norm for most of the population. This form of 'intellectual crofting' is designed to suit local people; the grant, while building the capacity needed to enable other developments to take place, is also about increasing the number of local people active in the organisation.

**Watts Gallery, Surrey**  
(£46,000 over two years, awarded March 2017)

Located in the village of Compton, nestled in the Surrey hills between Guildford and Godalming, Watts Gallery and Artists Village lies on the estate of George Frederic Watts, an important Victorian symbolist painter and sculptor, and his wife Mary. It hosts the definitive collection of Watts' paintings, drawings and sculpture, but aims to be more than a gallery dedicated to one artist, with the ambition to be the centre for the study of Victorian and early 20th century art and architecture.

The grant was to support innovative plans to develop the potential of its extensive grounds and collection of buildings, by paying for a new post – Curator of Landscape. The role is to oversee the development of the site, such as the commissioning and construction of bridges, paths and signage, and the installation of outdoor sculpture. It requires an unusual mix of skills – part estate manager, part curator – and is pitched at an early career professional to be supported by the senior curator and the director.

**Silk Heritage Trust, Macclesfield**  
(£99,000 over three years, awarded March 2017)

The Silk Heritage Trust oversees four small museums celebrating Macclesfield's industrial heritage. Today, the town has experienced



industrial decline with its associated problems, but in the 1830s was one of the great silk-producing centres, with over 70 mills in operation, exporting all over the world. The sites house original silk-weaving machinery, historical pattern designs and the collection of the Brocklehurst family (local mill-owners, whose daughter Marianne collected fine arts and Egyptian antiquities).

The challenge of maintaining the museums' operations with a small team constrained the capacity of the part-time Director to work strategically to strengthen the organisation's position. The grant to the Silk Heritage Trust was a contribution to the Director's salary to enable her to focus on strategic activities. These included a visitor consultation on engagement with the collections and improvements to the care of, access to and documentation of the trust's collections.

## **Museums Sheffield**

(£99,000 over three years, awarded March 2017)

Museums Sheffield oversees three sites, which between them attracted over one million visitors in 2016. The collections reflect Sheffield's rich industrial heritage as a steel-making city and benefited from 19th century philanthropists, with donations from local businessmen John Graves and John Mappin. It includes the Ruskin Gallery, which displays items put together by the art critic and thinker as a creative and educational tool for Sheffield's metalworkers.

With growing pressure on public sector sources, Museums Sheffield has sought to increase earned revenue and develop relationships with local philanthropists through the 'Going Public' programme, which has attracted considerable national interest. Initiated in 2015, it aims to foster links with private collectors and potential donors, and increase the number of loans and gifts of artworks to its collections and exhibitions. This innovative approach to partnerships and philanthropy is rooted in the history of the collections rather than the pursuit of commercial sponsorship, and nods to the philanthropic origins of Sheffield's existing collections and the ways in which the city has benefited from private giving in the past.

The grant will support the continuation and development of 'Going Public' by conducting research into Sheffield's own collections to uncover and share philanthropic stories and connections. The funding is for a new curator to take this forward, widen international and regional collaboration, deliver new exhibitions of items from private collections and develop an events programme.

**“It is great to have an extra brain in the mix and also that this role is focussed. It is early days but I am already seeing positive changes, particularly in terms of us being able to improve and deepen audience engagement with the Going Public project.”**

Kirstie Hamilton, Head of Exhibitions & Displays, Museums Sheffield

## **Impact and outcomes**

### **Skills development**

The appointment of early career curators in some of these projects has had a clear impact on their own personal development.

Ashley Gallant, who was appointed Project Curator in Sheffield through the 'Going Public' project, while still in his first year, described the benefits:

“This position has already improved my art historical knowledge and this, as well as my improved research skills, will be of significant use to me in the future. I have also attended several seminars and conferences, valuable CPD opportunities.”

For Olie Crediton, Trainee Boat Curator at Falmouth, the project has opened a path into a curatorial career. He also spoke of the skills he has developed:

“I came to this role cold, with no previous curatorial experience, but it was a really good match for me... I had done jobs in front-of-house positions within museums and had really enjoyed working in the sector... Curatorship is a fantastic career path.”

### **Collections expertise**

Reporting in 2016, the then Curator of the Grundy Art Gallery Richard Parry described the impact of the JEF funded post:

“The use of the collections is increasing daily and supporting and developing this use has been a joy as many of the collections [were] so underused and unknown up until now.”

Richard also comments on the additional skills brought by the Collections Manager Caroline Hall, which enabled the gallery to apply to the Arts Council for collections accreditation status in 2017.

“[We] can't imagine where we would be without the JEF grant, we couldn't have done the accreditation application or the storage improvements... We have discovered a Paul Nash drawing in the collection... The sense of being able to do things has taken some getting used to.”

### **Public engagement**

Head of Exhibitions and Displays at Sheffield, Kirstie Hamilton, outlined the additional value that a new curator brought to the 'Going Public' programme:

“Without Ashley being in post, there would only have been a basic public programme for the Kirkland Collection exhibition, but his involvement meant an additional three specialist events which attracted 75 participants who engaged more deeply with the exhibition.”

The injection of new blood brought about by the two appointments in Falmouth has increased the museum's wider public engagement. Both post holders have been directly involved in local sailing events. The Apprentice Boatbuilder, Reuben Thompson, has begun to supervise the 30 or so volunteers in the museum's boat workshop, while the Trainee Boat Curator, Olie Crediton, has reinvigorated the museum's social media profile by capturing some of this work in photographs and sharing them on the museum workshop's Facebook page.

## **Partnerships**

The additional capacity provided by the new Collections Manager in Blackpool enabled the curator to develop his knowledge of the collections, which in turn aided the development of new partnerships. Successful applications have been made to the Contemporary Art Society and the Art Fund. The Grundy has become a member of the Association of Performing Arts collections and linked up with the De La Warr Pavilion on a show about Punch and Judy and contemporary art. It is also lending pictures from the collection to local schools.

In Cornwall, delivering the apprentice's formal training has established links between the museum and Falmouth Marine School.

## **Funding**

The impact of the Collections Manager in Blackpool has been seen in higher-quality funding applications. By 2017, the Collections Manager had already brought in more than their salary in capital and project grants. The gallery has secured an Esmée Fairbairn Collections Care grant and is looking for ways to exploit the collections further through image licensing as well as public display. A small part of the grant was for acquisitions, which was used to buy an early Tracey Emin neon work, part of a collection of neon works to complement the Blackpool Illuminations collections.

In Sheffield, Kirstie Hamilton, the Head of Exhibitions and Displays, who oversees the 'Going Public' programme, reported that the security of three years of funding has helped them to make a case to other funders for further support during the coming years.

Funding developments can also be seen in some of the other organisations. National Maritime Museum Cornwall reported that the confidence shown in the organisation by the JEF award strengthened their case for funds from the John Fisher Foundation for their major Captain Bligh and the Bounty exhibition.

The Silk Heritage Trust in Macclesfield reported that the grant helped them secure funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Collections Fund. The Orkney Natural History Society used the grant to match European LEADER funds from the Scottish Rural Network, giving further impetus to their development plans.

## 6.2. Leadership in geographic areas or fields of specialist expertise

Five of the Museums and Galleries Fund grants were made to organisations that sought to take a leadership role within their region or field. In most instances this involved provision of skills development for staff, sometimes with a new post, and then a process of developing and working with networks to share skills and learning. This impact was felt across the region or, in some cases, through national networks.

“The Ellerman funding allowed us to put together a really successful model that we’ve been able to continue. We still have a guest curator slot annually and we still do the Curatorial Directions programme. We want to be sure there are people available locally to step into curatorial positions should they become available. This project reflects a responsibility that we feel as an organisation to the sector in Northern Ireland.”

Hugh Mulholland, Senior Curator,  
Metropolitan Arts Centre, Belfast

### **Metropolitan Arts Centre, Belfast**

(£82,825 over two years, awarded March 2014)

The first grant of this type made was at the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC), Belfast. The MAC is a unique and vital institution for Northern Ireland. Established on a foundation of non-sectarianism and welcoming all communities, it serves a role within Belfast and the region quite apart from its importance as the pre-eminent arts venue in Northern Ireland. This project, now completed, aimed to use the MAC’s leading position in contemporary art as a platform for developing the skills of emerging local curators, as well as supporting other museums and galleries.

The context for the grant was that there simply was no training in contemporary visual arts curation in Northern Ireland. Most young people with an interest in the field would have to travel elsewhere in the UK to gain experience, with a brain drain effect. The aim of this project was to bring curators to Belfast and to nurture and retain skills to develop the arts scene in Northern Ireland. It operated through three strands: a guest curator programme – bringing people in to undertake major pieces of work at MAC; a curatorial intern programme – developing a young curator who would work on MAC International (a biennale); and a short-course training programme for 12 emerging curators.

### **Bristol Museums**

(£84,425 over two years, awarded March 2015)

Bristol Museums’ natural history curators identified that funding cuts across the South West had resulted in a reduction of specialist knowledge, leaving just nine natural sciences curators in a region with over 220 museums. By necessity, all these post holders are generalists in this vast field. Skills gaps were evident, particularly related to conserving and cataloging specimens, and this work was being left undone for fear of the damage and loss that unskilled staff might cause.

Following consultation across the region, the four-person team (3 FTE) at Bristol Museums identified a need for training in specimen preparation, along with digital skills, at their institution and across the region. The grant funded a two-phase programme: to build the skills base in natural sciences curators, and then to cascade these skills and knowledge to a wider group across the South West. The training programme took a strategic view and focused on the two big areas of specimen preparation and digitisation, rather than delivering lots of small pieces of ad hoc training.

### **Lakeland Arts, Cumbria**

(£90,000 over three years, awarded March 2015)

The Cumbria Museum Consortium was formed in 2012 by Tullie House, Lakeland Arts and the Wordsworth Trust. The funded project was led by Lakeland Arts. While there is an impressive range of artefacts in the county's museums, including important local artists and writers and historical collections, these are dispersed. The museums also face a number of challenges associated with the mountainous terrain, transport difficulties and low population density. In common with many other museums in rural areas, they rely heavily on volunteers.

The aim of this grant was to increase capacity to support skills development and help the network share expertise and learning across a wider network of Cumbria's museums. By sharing knowledge across the group of museums they hoped to address the needs of the smaller ones. The project included the creation of a county-wide, online database to bring all the collections together for the first time. By working together they encouraged visitors to go to multiple venues and so increase footfall for the partners. The training and upskilling of staff and volunteers also enabled smaller museums to borrow key items from major collections and undertake fundraising to improve physical security.

### **National Museum Wales**

(£92,950 over two years, awarded March 2016)

The grant to National Museum Wales (NMW), working in partnership with the Natural History Museum (NHM), was for a highly specialised area of natural history: Mollusca (including snails, slugs, clams, squid, cuttlefish and octopus). The project focused on locating 'types' across the collections – these are the original specimens first used to identify and describe species. Types remain as relevant today as ever, but few curators are sufficiently specialised or practically able to attend to their research and curation.

This project addresses the concern that important specimens could be overlooked within individual collections. The aim was to train

“For me, one of the big benefits from this programme is that it provided the space to think about some key areas of curatorship - like legal issues relating to collections, or digitisation - and consolidate my own skills in them, as well as helping other curators to learn essential skills. It has given me more confidence in issues that are changing quite fast.”

Isla Gladstone, Senior Curator  
(Natural Sciences), Bristol Museums

“For those who have been curators for a long time, this is updating their skills, and keeping in touch with each other - there's a social element to it. Curators in small, very rural museums have a tough job. They are stretched, often under a lot of pressure, with very little support. By helping them keep in touch with each other it relieves a bit of pressure.”

Kate Parry, Manager, Cumbria  
Museums Consortium

staff at major museums in six cities in England and Scotland where there was no specialist curator, to recognise and categorise these species, and to create an online catalogue to provide a research and type identification resource. The grant paid for staff time, expenses and other direct costs such as the website. The work of specialist curators from NMW and the NHM has enabled the collections to be reviewed in terms of scientific importance and significance, in the light of current knowledge and research.

### **National Army Museum, London** (£66,085 over two years, awarded March 2016)

The grant to the National Army Museum was aimed at improving practice at some 138 regimental and corps museums around the UK. These museums receive support from a variety of sources, from the Ministry of Defence, local authorities and self-generated income. Many are facing practical and financial challenges.

Supporting the National Army Museum to work with these museums to form regional networks is intended to increase their resilience through joint training, collaborative bids for collections and exhibitions projects, sharing expertise and improving professional links across the networks. A JEF-funded full-time Project Officer works around the country to coordinate the networks and deliver opportunities for fundraising, shared learning, economies of scale and the professional development of curators.

## Impact and outcomes

### **Increased curatorial knowledge**

A common objective of these grants was to develop curatorial leadership within institutions to address specific skills gaps across geographical areas or subject specialisms. Several grantees thought that skills developed by existing staff through the projects would be retained, both within their own organisations and within partner organisations, after the end of their project.

Isla Gladstone of Bristol Museums described how the training there helped to consolidate her own skills:

“There are things that as curators we are supposed to know about, but in a broad and busy role there isn’t always time to keep up to date with fast-moving areas of expertise, or to ask for guidance or help with them.”

### **Networks**

These projects highlighted the importance of networks to achieving the spread of learning and skills.

Successfully delivering the contemporary art curatorial training programme raised the MAC’s profile in the Plus Tate museums network and led to them

contributing to a Tate-supported project focusing on curatorial development.

In Cumbria, the additional practical assistance provided by Cumbria Museums Consortium has strengthened working relationships between larger and smaller museums within the network. Some tangible outcomes included a shared collections database, joint exhibitions and successful funding bids for minor capital works from Museum Development North West.

Bristol Museums used its existing natural sciences networks and South West Museum Development to promote the programme. This shared activity in turn helped build relationships between individual museums.

The National Army Museum's project is focused on creating new networks to encourage ongoing support and skills sharing between the many regimental museums. Since the beginning of their project, networks have increased from four to ten.

### **Volunteer engagement**

The work at the MAC had an impact on volunteering at the institution. The 'Curatorial Directions' programme provided opportunities for young people to engage with artists, and formed the basis for plans for a new offer for volunteers, who play a significant role in life at the MAC more widely.

### **Reputation**

For grantees taking leadership roles, there is evidence that the reputations of the lead organisations have been enhanced through these projects. Isla Gladstone at Bristol Museums commented:

"I have learned a lot about the 'on the ground' situation in museums throughout the region, which in turn means that we (at Museums Bristol) can have a bigger impact nationally."

The National Museum Wales representatives reported that they were now seen as a centre of excellence, and that securing the award had enhanced their team's reputation within the institution as a whole, and their profile with colleagues. Others found that the grant had increased the status of their organisations and projects, and helped influence decision-makers. The Cumbria Museums Consortium, for instance, lobbied for funding from the North West museums development network for minor capital works in museums in their county. In some instances securing John Ellerman funding also helped make the case for the value of curators' work within individual institutions and raised their profiles.

### **Attracting new funding**

In Cumbria, one of the most important outcomes for some members of the Cumbria Museums Consortium was the support and capacity it provided for making funding applications. These successes helped to knit the network closer together, providing a tangible benefit for members. Some of the new local networks created between small regimental museums, through the grant to the National Army Museum, have secured funding for collaborative projects.

The MAC in Belfast was so impressed with the success of the curatorial training programme supported by the grant that they secured further funding from elsewhere for a similar programme the following year.

## **6.3. Links with capital projects**

Several grants were made against a background of impending or hoped-for capital investments in the grantee institution. The three projects described here were either designed as a response to capital investment and the changes to the business that it brought about, or helped to precipitate investment.

“Before this project there was just me with the ceramics collections knowledge. This project enabled us to begin to build that knowledge in other people. It has increased our curatorial strength in terms of that knowledge. I also learnt a lot in terms of how to delegate within my own role. I had had the collection to myself for eight years, so having someone in to help, though great and much needed, was also a transition for me. So I think I grew professionally too, in terms of sharing the collection and my knowledge of it.”

Helen Walsh, Curator  
of Ceramics, York Museums Trust

### **York Museums Trust**

(£80,400 over three years, awarded March 2014)

York Art Gallery has the largest and most representative collection of British Studio Ceramics in the country. An £8m extension at the rear of the gallery and the opening of a previously unused internal space, completed in 2015, increased their display area by 60%. At the heart of the project was the establishment of the Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA). This created opportunities for new displays of the ceramics collection, including a ‘Wall of Pots’ with changing exhibits, an area showing ceramics in domestic settings, a permanent display on the history of ceramics, site-specific commissions and major exhibitions.

This grant funded a new member of staff for three years to support the curation of the new ceramics space in the run up to its opening. The new Collections Facilitator recruited volunteers, completed the digitisation of the collection to make the full catalogue available online and developed the international membership of the Subject Specialist Network for 20th Century British Studio Ceramics.

### **Bowes Museum, County Durham**

(£89,250 over three years, awarded March 2015)

The Bowes Museum in County Durham houses the collections of the 19th-century Bowes family. Bowes was a local mine-owner who married a French actress and painter. First opened in 1892, the museum building is a huge ‘chateau’, dominating its surroundings. It was restored in 2005 with a new library, study and storage facilities.



The museum houses the largest collection of Spanish art in the UK outside London or Edinburgh. Nearby Auckland Castle also holds important Spanish works by Francisco de Zurbarán. Together with the University of Durham, which has one of the leading Iberian language departments in the country, the museums aim to use their combined assets to develop the region into a national centre for the study of Spanish art and to create a ‘cultural corridor’ as a means of increasing visitor numbers to the region.

The grant aimed to develop knowledge and recognition of the trove of Spanish art in County Durham. The appointment of an Assistant Curator of Fine Art at Bowes represented a new partnership for the Museum with Auckland Castle, which is in the midst of a major Heritage Lottery Fund capital project. The post was also a means to develop curatorial research and exhibitions programmes at both institutions, build capacity at Bowes and provide a resource at an important time in the development of a cultural hub in County Durham.

### **Gainsborough’s House, Sudbury, Suffolk** (£84,000 over three years, awarded March 2015)

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), leading landscape and portrait painter and founder member of the Royal Academy, was born in Sudbury. His family home opened as a museum celebrating his life and work in 1961 and has grown slowly to include various surrounding buildings that are used as a shop, print workshop and education centre. The acquisition of another nearby building opened up the prospect of a substantial capital project to create a large gallery space with archives for Gainsborough and the town of Sudbury (which is famous for its silk industry).

This grant aimed to develop the civic role of the museum and promote Gainsborough’s House in Suffolk. The new position of ‘Keeper of Art and Place’ was intended to build links with the county’s other museums and support the Director in the realisation of his vision. Like the Bowes Museum, the project at Gainsborough’s House sought to develop cultural tourism in the area through partnerships, while consolidating its reputation for scholarship and leadership in the museum sector.

“Curators bring with them passions and interests that help to expand the collection and how it is used. This has happened with the Keeper of Art and Place - she has helped put collections where they should be, at the heart of the institution. The role has had positive impact upon visitor numbers, how we are perceived within the region, our ability to use our collection in inspiring and proactive ways, our championing of local, regional and national heritage, and our championing of collections and curatorial skills.”

Mark Bills, Director,  
Gainsborough’s House

## Impact and outcomes

These grants demonstrate how investment in collections research can add value to the conceptualisation and delivery of capital projects. In York and at the Bowes, additional curatorial capacity has enhanced the impact of capital developments through collections interpretation and public engagement. For the Bowes Museum, curatorial research has supported its civic role and identity within a bigger regional picture, by developing County Durham as a centre of excellence in Spanish art. In Suffolk at Gainsborough's House, in-depth research into the Gainsborough family's links to the local silk industry in Sudbury has created new exhibition and display themes for the planned new museum, along with developing important local and national connections.

### **Professional development**

These grants have offered significant professional development opportunities for the post holders.

Fiona Green, the three-year Collections Facilitator at York Art Gallery, worked closely with the Curator of Ceramics, Helen Walsh, to devise new ways to present and interpret the collection and to recruit and manage a team of volunteers. She also had the opportunity to study for an AMA, the recognised professional qualification for museums staff.

In 2016 Fiona reported:

“I have been given sole responsibility for an exhibition opening in 2017. I manage the volunteers at the gallery... which has developed my experience of managing people. I plan regular meetings, provide training and site induction for gallery volunteers. I have organised some of the ceramic subject specialist network meetings and work on content for the CoCA website, improving my skills and ceramics knowledge.”

At Gainsborough's House, the Keeper of Art and Place, Louisa Brouwer, created town trails for Sudbury and created new exhibitions from her research into the site and the collections. She said:

“I often wear ‘many hats’ on a day-to-day basis, which has allowed me to develop a flexible and proactive approach to the challenges and opportunities that arise as part of a small museum. My curatorial skills in areas such as exhibition development, care of collections and stakeholder engagement have been particularly enhanced, aiding in the development of my own knowledge base and skill set for the future.”

The Assistant Curator at the Bowes, Bernadette Petti, has written catalogues and given talks for visitors. She was also responsible for the catalogue and display of an exhibition of Spanish Art from the North East collections at the Wallace Collection in London. Reporting in 2017, she wrote:

“Research is at the very core of my work as a curator. During this period, I have been able to develop my ability to research, analyse and elaborate a wide range of material and deliver presentations, papers, essays and interpretation material for displays and exhibitions.”

## Partnerships

Bernadette Petti, the Bowes Museum’s Assistant Curator works alongside the newly appointed Curator of Spanish Art at Auckland Castle. This link consolidates the relationship between both collections and the University of Durham, and develops a research culture that is enriched through a collaborative doctoral partnership with the National Gallery.

In York, after the new CoCA opened, York Museums Trust used the funded post to build its national specialist subject network of partners on British ceramics. A partnership with the University of York provides access to specialist expertise and has led to a collaborative PhD programme.

Gainsborough’s House is now an active member of the Suffolk Museums Association and has forged strong links with Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service, which has significant Constable collections. Gainsborough’s House recently benefited from donations from the Constable family collection and also received a substantial Cedric Morris collection, reflecting its growing status. Museum Director Mark Bills said:

“The role [Keeper of Art and Place] has had a positive impact upon visitor numbers, how we are perceived within the region, our ability to use our collection in inspiring and proactive ways, our championing of local, regional and national heritage, and our championing of collections and curatorial skills.”

## Local links

The silk link exploited by Gainsborough’s House led to an exhibition focusing on Gainsborough’s imagery, his family’s business connections and the local silk industry. This not only improved professional networks but also built support in the town. (The museum gave 50 free exhibition tickets to each of the four silk companies still active in the town.)

A new town trail engaged local people, and a Gainsborough trail is planned for London. A festival of silk is now planned and Gainsborough’s House is represented on the steering committee.

## Attracting additional funding

No capital funding was in place at Gainsborough’s House at the time the grant was made. However, the new post-holder quickly uncovered connections between the museum and the history of Sudbury. This led to a town trail and identifying connections between local historic wool and silk weaving and Gainsborough’s distinctive representations of fabric in his portraits. This work greatly developed the proposition for Gainsborough’s House and helped them re-imagine what the museum could be, leading to Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund support for a planned new gallery space.

## 6.4. Digital initiatives

Two grants focused on developing digital resources: the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery in Exeter and the National Inventory Research Project (NIRP), based at Glasgow University.

Two other projects which also had significant digital elements are described in other sections of the report. National Museum Wales with its partner Natural History Museum created a new on line database of the Mollusca 'Types' identified during the work with local collections, which can be added to in future. For Cumbria Museums Consortium, having an online resource for the first time enabled thematic searches by museums staff across the collections and better use of local items in exhibitions such as the 'Celebrating Women of Cumbria' displays in 2018.

All four will eventually be publicly accessible and so will have a long term legacy.

“We’ve learned a lot about how to manage our own data day-to-day, and we’ve learned how to build a database from scratch, something I wouldn’t have had an opportunity to do otherwise. It’s enabled me to really understand how data can be put together to be usable.”

Holly Morgenroth, Collections Officer,  
Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art  
Gallery, Exeter

### **Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter**

(£91,931 over two years, awarded March 2014)

In 1872, HMS Challenger began a voyage of the world’s oceans to gather samples of sea-life. On her return in 1876, the specimens were extensively researched and this was the starting point for much of modern oceanography. Precise information about where and when items were gathered means that the data and specimens from the expedition have continuing value as a baseline for research on the effects of ocean acidification and climate change. The collection, however, has been dispersed across museums around the country and internationally.

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery (RAMM) in Exeter has one of the larger holdings of Challenger’s oceanographic specimens. The aim of this project was to reunite the collection through an online database.

Working with other local, national and university museums, the project involved the development of a standardised means of categorising items. Led by RAMM, it was run with the assistance of the Natural History Museum (NHM), where the largest part of the Challenger collection is held. NHM also offered curatorial contact time to help the RAMM team improve skills – the intention being to then share this learning among other partner museums.

## **National Inventory Research Project, Glasgow University** (£45,000 over two years, awarded March 2014)

This grant was towards the final phase of an existing project cataloguing old master paintings and adding them to an online database. The National Inventory Research Project (NIRP) was established in 2001 and is based at the University of Glasgow. It had already worked with 250 UK museums, cataloguing some 9,000 works of art. The grant funded part of the project, ‘NIRP in the North’, which worked with four of the most important collections in the region: National Museums Liverpool; Manchester Art Gallery; Leeds Museums and Galleries; and York Art Gallery.

The project focused on continental European paintings held by the four institutions, a subject with few specialist curators outside UK capital cities. Funding covered the costs of four part-time research assistant posts, to be shared across the partnership.

## Impact and outcomes

### **New discoveries**

The initial estimate of 1,050 paintings to be catalogued by NIRP in the North was based on the museums’ own assessments, but a lack of specialist expertise meant the number of relevant works in the collections at the four galleries was underestimated, as some of these collections had not been reviewed for decades. By the end of the project, data and images were created for 1,193 paintings. The team also delivered an impressive number of new discoveries, including 50 revised artist attributions and better understanding of the subject matter of some paintings.

The Challenger project also led to discoveries. Holly Morgenroth, Collections Officer at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, said:

“I think the biggest impacts have been on other museums... Some have discovered that they have got Challenger material when they didn’t realise it. In a couple of cases we’ve taken a grimy, dusty box of materials that no one’s done anything about for years, and suddenly it’s become this really interesting part of their collection.”

### **Knowledge retention**

The NIRP work was undertaken by a diverse group of art historians, including a former curator, an Italian art historian, a young Polish art historian and a mature PhD student at the Courtauld Institute. All the posts were temporary and, when the work was complete, one researcher took a job in Italy while the others began work on a voluntary basis with other collections in Europe and the UK. The transfer of their work onto the NIRP database and website enabled the newly acquired learning to be retained.

A series of well-received regional seminars were held to help develop staff skills and disseminate the outcomes of the project, making links with other museums and universities. Museum volunteers were also involved in these events.

The learning for the RAMM staff was considerable, and a comprehensive training programme skilled them up to better manage the database and website in the long term. These formed the heart of the project.

### **Accessibility**

Unsurprisingly, digital projects have at their heart the means to make collections more accessible to researchers and the public. The collections can be accessed via the HMS Challenger website ([www.hmschallenger.net](http://www.hmschallenger.net)) and the NIRP in the North project contributed to the National Inventory of Continental European Paintings (NICE Paintings), accessible via the Visual Arts Data Service (VADS) website ([www.vads.ac.uk](http://www.vads.ac.uk)).

The websites which formed part of the other projects are also publicly available. National Museums Wales Mollusca Types can be found at <https://gbmolluscatypes.ac.uk>. The Cumbria Museums Consortium database is currently only available to museums staff, but will be publicly accessible in 2019.

Holly Morgenroth at RAMM in Exeter describes how the Challenger collection has become more accessible in the gallery as well: “While we have always said



Bernadette Petti, Assistant Curator of Fine Art, overseeing the installation of *St Luke Drawing the Virgin and Child* at Bowes Museum, © Bowes Museum

that the Challenger material was important, we hadn't really done anything on it in the gallery. Through this project we've been able to do some interpretation work to highlight the material within the gallery. Front of house staff are really interested in it and like to draw attention to it with the public."

The Challenger project also conducted follow up work on social media to highlight the collection and direct people to it. A volunteer created 12 months of Twitter content such as '#Onthisday in 1876...' to link to individual records of items found on that day - essentially re-telling the story of the voyage in real time.

## Networks

For RAMM, the Challenger project was a significant opportunity for a local museum to lead a project with national partners across 23 museums, including institutions in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the US. This also raised the profile of the Exeter museum. The dispersed nature of the collection meant that a major part of the project involved synchronising documentation standards across the number of museums, and agreeing protocols for how the objects would be catalogued on the new website.

In Glasgow, the 'NIRP in the North' project was the final stage of a larger national initiative to create an inventory of old master paintings in major collections. This forms a permanent resource.



## 6.5. New models of curating

Four of the funded organisations are categorised here for their ambition in experimenting with new approaches to curating and presenting work

### **Beamish Museum**

(£78,000 over three years, awarded March 2016)

Beamish is a ‘living museum’ that uses its buildings and collections to tell the stories of everyday life in the North East. It is among the most popular paid-for attractions in the UK, attracting 650,000 people a year. It employs over 370 people and engages 420 volunteers. Its latest initiative is the £17m ‘Remaking Beamish’ project which will develop its visitor offer, to include a 1950s house and the recreation of a Georgian coaching inn.

The grant was towards the specialist curatorial skills required by the new development – specifically those associated with ‘contextual curating’. This uses stories from local people, backed up by rigorous archival research, to support the relocation of and create specifications for buildings and their interiors, and inform decisions about which objects are displayed.

### **Turner contemporary**

(£90,000 over three years, awarded March 2016)

The grant made to Turner Contemporary was for two projects to pioneer ways of curating exhibitions that put local people at the heart of the process. Groups of volunteers commit to participate for a number of months or years and during that time explore what they want to see at the gallery, who and what to commission, as well as getting involved in the set-up and layout of an exhibition. The volunteers work with the gallery’s curatorial team, whose own methods and approaches to curation are challenged and developed through the process.

The projects were the commission of work by textile artist Kashif Nadim Chaudry, and a major exhibition in 2018 based on T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land*, much of which was written while he lived in the town. A major focus of these projects was to evaluate the outcomes of the alternative curatorial models. The quality of the resulting exhibitions was demonstrated by the extension of the display dates of the Chaudry exhibition, many positive reviews for the *Wasteland* project in the national press and enthusiastic feedback from the public on both shows.

“The project has forced us to re-think the boundaries between the different disciplines and departments within a gallery and consider, what are the boundaries of curating?”

Trish Scott, Journeys with ‘The Waste Land’ Research Curator, Turner Contemporary



## Tate Foundation

(£90,903 over three years, awarded March 2017)

The grant to the Tate Foundation is for work associated with the touring of a newly acquired work, *Le Passeur* (The Ferryman) by English artist William Stott (1857–1900), which was largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Tate’s research, with museum directors, registrars and development officers across the UK, found that cuts to local and regional museums and galleries had reduced skills and capacity across the spectrum of operations, especially for curatorial and registrar functions. This had a negative impact on their capacity to apply for major loans from national and regional institutions. The *Passeur* project is part of a response to this crisis.

*Le Passeur* will travel to Oldham (Stott’s home town), Aberdeen, Oriol y Parc and Southampton. As part of the project, Tate is running workshops in ten other locations reaching 100 organisations to tackle the barriers to borrowing works of art by providing training for the registrar functions necessary for applying for and managing loans, with a mentoring bursary scheme to support ten loan displays in venues outside London. The grant forms part of the overall project, specifically enabling the painting to tour to Wales and providing ten workshops and bursaries across the country. The project runs until 2020.

## Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums/Laing Art Gallery

(£86,148 over two and a half years, awarded March 2017)

The Laing Gallery is one of nine sites run by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (another, the Hatton, was also a recipient of support from the Fund). Opened in 1904, it has built a reputation for the quality of its historical and contemporary exhibits. Its collections include British oil paintings and watercolours, ceramics, silverware and glassware.

In 2013 the Laing introduced charging for visits to their high-profile exhibitions, partly to increase income in response to local authority funding cuts. The programme has been a success, popular with visitors and contributes to the running costs of the gallery. However the exhibitions have been curated by partners, rather than the Laing itself. By increasing curatorial capacity, the project aims to use in-house research and curation to develop a new model for touring shows. The funding was directed towards freeing up time for existing curators to spend on researching and developing exhibitions in-house, through the appointment of a new Assistant Keeper to give administrative and practical support.

Through this process, the Laing aims to develop a new model for making exhibitions which can then be toured to other locations, generating more income for the gallery and raising its profile. For a local authority museum this is a bold step towards greater financial independence.

“Without your creatives and their knowledge, how are you going to have the content to engage an audience?”

Julie Milne, Chief Curator of Art Galleries, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

## **Impact and outcomes**

### **Volunteer engagement**

At Turner Contemporary, the importance of engaging with local people in new ways has led to the development of a more complex kind of curating, involving time and people as well as objects. The approach is a radical reimagining and extension of the role of the volunteer in an art gallery. Traditional models of curation have been subverted, with the power to take decisions largely ceded to the groups of volunteers involved in the two projects.

The model also requires a much deeper level of commitment from participants, who see through a lengthy process from the development of ideas to the physical presentation of work at the gallery. In the Wasteland project, the group of volunteers was formed from an open call via local groups. There were 100 responses initially and the resulting group settled at about 20 core members, with 20 more who dipped in and out. Group members developed other activities related to the Wasteland, such as a walking group and a reading group linked to T. S. Eliot. The experience of involving volunteers in this way has also challenged the curatorial staff and prompted the gallery to review its mission and purpose.

### **Community engagement and partnerships**

Trish Scott, the Research Curator for Turner Contemporary's Wasteland project, described the project as a catalyst for deeper community engagement with volunteers and also expanding the reach of the show out of the gallery and into venues across Margate. She sees this as strengthening ties with the local community beyond the duration of the project – and contributing to the gallery's thinking ahead of hosting the Turner Prize in 2019.

Beamish has a long tradition of working with volunteers and engaging with local people as 'contextual curators'. Part of the Remaking Beamish project includes the recreation of a 1950s terraced street and moving an old cinema, brick by brick, to a new site at the museum. This has at its core the application of local knowledge to understand objects from the time, how they were used, and the lives of their owners. The end product is a more authentic presentation of objects, enabling visitors to interact with the collections in a unique way.

The museum is also working with HMP Frankland in Durham, to develop heritage skills in their furniture-building workshop.

### **Challenges to established ways of working**

The use of volunteers has challenged how Turner Contemporary works. Volunteers have asked questions about why exhibitions are organised the way they are, their budgets and processes, resulting in different relationships with lenders and artists.

Trish Scott at Turner Contemporary said:

“For lots of us [museum professionals] there are practices that you don’t normally articulate because you are just doing it. Because we have a broader group of decision-makers in this project, a lot of what I would normally hold in my head has to be translated and discussed. This has a time impact and forces you to really think about what you are doing and why. You become more self-aware.”

### **Approaches to countering cuts**

Tate and the Laing Art Gallery, in different ways, seek to address some of the major structural challenges facing the museums and galleries sector.

The widespread impact of cuts falls hardest on organisations reliant on local authority funding. Tate, through its project to tour Stott’s *Le Passeur*, is seeking to support local galleries through skills development and offering access to its collections. Funding for this project was provided as, while nationally funded museums are expected to work across the country, there is no dedicated government funding for this. Meanwhile, the Laing Gallery is exploring a new business model and creating major charging exhibitions inspired by their own collections and enhanced with loans. This project will promote both the gallery and its collections further afield.

## **6.6. A deeper understanding of collections**

All of the projects supported by the Museums and Galleries Fund are ultimately concerned with the better understanding and interpretation of collections.

Curatorial skills are the key to unlocking the academic, scientific and historical importance, the national and local significance, and the civic and public value of the objects they care for.

In this final group of projects, funding was sought to explore in-depth specific specialist collections.

### **Leeds Museums and Galleries**

(£112,000 over three years, awarded March 2014)

Leeds Museums and Galleries has a busy team of eight curators working across nine sites, along with three conservators. They put on several exhibitions a year and lend about 17,000 artefacts annually.

The museum was keen to address the decline in geological curatorial expertise in Leeds and to work with others with similar collections. A new Assistant Geology Curator brought expertise to a collection that had had little attention following the retirement of the previous specialist curator. Using the Geoblitz model pioneered by the Horniman Museum in London, which grades individual specimens according to both their scientific value and potential use

for public engagement, the geology collections were reviewed by a range of expert advisors. The knowledge and skills gained from this process were then shared with nine project partners across the UK.

### **Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums/Hatton Gallery** (£82,264 over 15 months, awarded March 2014)

The focus of support for the Hatton Gallery, part of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, was a project on 'Basic Design', an influential teaching method developed in art schools during the 1950s and 1960s. This moved away from methods of teaching that focused on drawing from life towards the teaching of core skills and the use of different techniques and materials to explore space, form and colour. The staff at Newcastle School of Fine Art played an important part in Basic Design's development, with leading proponents Richard Hamilton and Victor Pasmore working and teaching there.

The School of Fine Art and Hatton Gallery both held archives that were largely unexplored and uncatalogued. The grant backfilled the curator's post, enabling him to research the collection properly, speak to alumni to strengthen the collection's holdings, develop an exhibition on Basic Design in partnership with Tate, and disseminate the findings to the public and curators across the British Art Network. The project coincided with a major HLF funded capital project to refurbish the gallery.

“The collection now expands in a much more focused way. We've got much more of an idea of the shape of it and where it's heading ... Now we're much more able to think about where the collection is going, and we're profiling the experimental nature of the work that's been achieved by these collections.”

Suzie Plumb, Curator of Film and Media, Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton

### **Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton** (£92,505 over two years, awarded March 2015)

In the 1890s and 1900s, Brighton played an important role in the early days of filmmaking. The 'Brighton School' of filmmakers, including pioneers such as George Albert Smith and James Williamson, produced major films in the town, shooting on location and in the cutting edge studio built in neighbouring Hove. The Royal Pavilion and Museums (RPM) in Brighton hold a nationally important film and media collection dating from this time. The RPM team sought funding to develop deeper knowledge of the collection and present the story of film in Brighton to a wider audience. Today, Brighton has a thriving digital and creative industries economy and promotes itself as 'film city', so the collection had the potential to add value to RPM's reputation and positioning.

With 700,000 visitors per year across its five sites, RPM is a major part of Brighton's tourism economy. It is committed to developing and sharing skills across staff and volunteers. However, staff time is limited and the Curator of Film and Media is only funded for one day a week. Brighton's film and moving image collections were

not well known or researched. The collection's documentation was incomplete, with 22% of the objects without an individual record and only 26% of the records of a standard suitable for publishing online.

The 'Film Pioneers' project sought to build up the skills base among existing curators by extending their hours and offered a development opportunity for a member of the Front of House team. The grant enabled the curators of film and media, and fine art, to work together and exchange expertise. They made links with other film collections and related activity in the city and raised the profile of the collection through an exhibition at the museum.

## **Manchester Museum**

(£97,882 over two years, awarded March 2015)

Manchester Museum is a university museum and part of the Manchester Museums Partnership, which includes the Whitworth Art Gallery, the Manchester Art Gallery and the Gallery of Costume. Across the partnership there are extensive and diverse holdings of Islamic Art, with objects from the Turkish Empire, the Levant, Persia, Uzbekistan and India. Some items had recently been donated by Manchester's Muslim communities, but others had been in the collections for more than a century, without being properly catalogued.

The grant was to enable the documentation of the Islamic holdings across the Partnership. It funded a programme of curatorial training and development for staff and two temporary additional posts. The project worked collaboratively with national and regional centres of excellence such as the British Museum, V&A, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Glasgow Museums, to develop knowledge and skills. Learning was disseminated across the Islamic Art and Material Culture Subject Specialist Network of UK Museums.

“There is a huge drive to make collections more accessible but unless you provide the relevant training this is simply not going to happen ... We've really got to look not just in terms of typological skills and curatorial skills but the confidence level of curators as well.”

Stephen Welsh, Curator of Living Cultures, Manchester Museum

## **Impact and outcomes**

### **Staff development and opportunities**

The collections teams at all of the museums featured here reported increased knowledge and confidence as a result of these projects.

In Manchester, the appointee for the Early Career Curator post brought expertise in Islamic manuscripts and has also learned valuable museums skills. Curatorial visits have been made to key collections across the world and an international conference provided opportunities to strengthen professional connections and exchange knowledge.

In Brighton, the grant increased the hours for part-time staff and the team feels that curatorial skills' development has been substantial and has been retained

by the museum. The Assistant Curator, Alexia Lazou, made a huge contribution to the project and learned a great deal about aspects of collections care such as care of photographs, museum object photography and magic lantern slides – alongside dealing with some unexpected issues such as asbestos. The ‘Experimental Motion’ exhibition consolidated links made across the city with filmmakers and academics. It also located historic collections in a contemporary context.

The archive research at the Hatton Gallery not only improved the working knowledge of the curator but also stimulated the growth of the collection through additional donations. The appointee, brought in to backfill for the curator, went on to secure a full-time role at Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

In Leeds, Neil Owen, the Assistant Geology Curator, received high-quality external and in-house training opportunities, alongside access to the experts who were invited to review the collections, he also devised and presented public engagement and outreach events including a highly successful dinosaur exhibition which is now being offered by some of the project partners. His experience at the museum was captured on a website [www.geoblitzblog.com](http://www.geoblitzblog.com) Since his contract expired, Neil has secured a new role at Oxford University Museums. The post also gave the museum’s Curator of Natural Science the opportunity to line manage a member of staff for the first time.

### **Improved collections knowledge**

All these projects succeeded in better understanding of existing collections, and in the case of the Hatton adding to the Basic Design archive.

In Brighton, improved documentation led to better use of the existing collection. Over 1,800 records have been updated, making the museum better able to respond to enquiries and offers of donations.

The Hatton Gallery’s JEF-funded research and additions to the ‘Basic Design’ archives have raised the status of the gallery locally and nationally by highlighting the role of leading artists who taught in the Fine Art Department at Newcastle University in the 1960s, developing art school education through the concept of Basic Design. Julie Milne, Chief Curator, commented:

“Having time for research has been brilliant and handling the archive collection a rare opportunity... The research on the archive has raised the status of the Hatton Gallery as a museum with history, not just a gallery adjacent to the fine art department.”

In Leeds, collections reviews were conducted by nine other museums, supported by Neil Owen, leading to a greater appreciation of the collections. The host museum reported:

“Leeds Natural Science collections of conchology and etymology are designated, but having done the work on the geology collection we think that could be designated too.”

The museum plans to develop its geology collection over the next five years to make it a bigger part of public work, including improving some weaker parts of the collection (gemstones) and putting together a systematic collection of Yorkshire rocks.

### **Further funding and capital projects**

Deeper knowledge of collections has led to increased confidence to seek further funds. In Brighton, the greater expertise developed within the institution opened up new avenues for funding, with the team making a successful bid for an Art Fund New Collecting Award, and considering a bid for funding from the British Film Institute.

At the same time as the grant was awarded, Manchester Museums Partnership secured funding from the Treasury and Heritage Lottery Fund for a new South Asian gallery at Manchester Museum. This created additional opportunities to present and interpret the Islamic collections on which the grant focused. At the Hatton Gallery, the work required to research and improve the archive on 'Basic Design' raised the status of the collection and contributed to the Heritage Lottery Fund capital development. The refurbished gallery includes a dedicated study space for the archive, enabling public access where previously there was none.

### **Partnerships**

The review of Brighton's film collections with external experts helped the museum to identify new areas of research and future partnerships, including the British Library and University of Sussex film and media department. The museum is also benefiting from improved links with contemporary practitioners.

The increased status of the Hatton Gallery and its holdings as a research resource has resulted in a set of collaborative PhDs being developed with Newcastle University.

Manchester Museum has made links with specialist curators from around the world who have visited the Islamic collection. It has also formed a relationship with the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, which holds a collection of Islamic manuscripts.

In Leeds, partnerships formed through the Geoblitz process increased the status of Leeds Museum as a sector specialist and enabled skills exchange between experts and museum staff.

### **Public engagement**

In Brighton, the 'Experimental Motion' exhibition, along with a young people's project based on the film and media collections, brought more young people into the museum. The team believes that the project has made a major contribution to the ambition of positioning Brighton as 'Film City'.

In Leeds, the findings from the external review of the collections were translated into public benefit, as Neil Owen created a range of events and programmes

to engage visitors, demonstrating their importance as a resource. The Museum Director and Curator commented:

“The collections have never been so looked at.”

In Manchester, there has been an increasing amount of learning and outreach work. Collections and other museum staff attended the Manchester Mela and the Muslim Lifestyle expo at the Trafford Centre, where they took objects from the collection to show to visitors. Stephen Welsh, the Lead Curator, reported that the project improved links between curators and the local Muslim community and that, while there was no exhibition resulting from the funded work undertaken at Manchester, the local community were aware of the project through outreach work on social media and local radio.







Clare Twomey with her work *10,000 Hours* in the Centre of Ceramic Art, Courtesy of York Museums Trust  
Image © Kippa Matthews

## 7. Outcomes from the grants

The above examples illustrate a wide range of outcomes. Section 6 of this report analyses the projects by certain themes, but across these they have a number of outcomes in common. There are three overarching outcomes, described in this section:

- The first are those most closely and directly linked with curatorship within the grantee institutions. They relate to skills and knowledge. The nature of the Fund, with its focus on curators, makes these outcomes the most expected.
- Stemming from these, the impact of investment in curatorial skills reaches into other parts of the institution to build organisational resilience. These include helping to leverage further funding, supporting the development of external partnerships and engaging volunteers and local communities.
- A third group are outcomes that extend the impact of improved curatorship outside individual museums or galleries into their relationships with other institutions, which also served to enhance the reputation of the organisations funded.

Through this lens, we can see, in broad terms, how investment in the curatorial base within a museum or gallery can extend into the whole of the organisation. It reveals how strengthened curatorship can send ripples through a museum or gallery, by unlocking the value of collections and increasing access to objects and stories. It describes a multiplier effect from investment in strong curatorship.

### 7.1 Core curatorial benefits

Across the body of work supported by the Museums and Galleries Fund, investment in people and skills within institutions has led to increased expertise, strengthened institutional knowledge and greater sharing of this knowledge.

One of the ways in which the skills base of organisations has been improved is by recruiting people for specific new posts. These people, mostly early career or trainee curatorial posts, have shown the value and energy that ‘new blood’ can bring:

- In Falmouth, the Trainee Boat Curator post and Advanced Apprentice role both had a strong impact on the museum, in terms of greater public engagement as well as through the skills they developed and brought to the organisation.
- At Gainsborough's House, the new post of Keeper of Art and Place enabled a wide range of additional activities to be implemented, including some that were not originally planned into the job description.
- In Leeds, the new assistant geology curator made significant advances in the development of a new model for reviewing the collection.

We have also seen how the opportunities created by focusing on curatorial skills have enabled existing staff members to flourish and develop:

- At RAMM in Exeter, the Collections Officer who oversaw the Challenger project was exposed to new professional opportunities, such as line management and budget management that she believed would not otherwise have been available at this stage in her career.
- At Turner Contemporary, the depth of engagement with volunteer groups provided an opportunity for curators and others within the gallery to think differently about how they work, forcing them to consider, for example, the boundaries between different parts of their operations.
- In Manchester, Curator of Living Cultures Stephen Welsh spoke of how skills development, coupled with opportunities to forge links with communities and other institutions, strengthened the confidence of staff in dealing with the Islamic collection at the Manchester Museum, and in engaging the local community.
- In York, Ceramics Curator Helen Walsh, who oversaw a junior member of staff for the first time, reported that she learned to delegate and grew in her professional role.

We have seen how investment in developing skills has led to new discoveries and the creation of new knowledge:

- The final stage of the NIRP project led by Glasgow University, researching old master collections in the North of England, led to a number of discoveries including new attributions.
- The Challenger project at Exeter identified items within other museums' collections, which had not previously been thought to have originated from the Challenger Expedition.
- Staff at the Grundy Art Gallery in Blackpool reported deeper knowledge of collections, including the discovery of a Paul Nash drawing.

Throughout the body of work discussed, we have seen how additional capacity has enabled the development of deeper understanding of collections:

- All the organisations featured in section 6.6 show evidence of a deeper understanding of their collections. In each case (Leeds, Brighton, Manchester, TWAM/Hatton Gallery) it was the investment in skills or additional capacity to enable professional development that led to the improvements in collections knowledge. In Brighton, for example, the cataloguing of the collection developed institutional knowledge from a simple list to a greater depth of detail and understanding. This also supported the work of the Curator of Film and Media in developing her own thinking about the collection.
- The Museums and Galleries Fund has made a particular contribution to natural sciences collections, in line with JEF's interest in the area. Activities led by National Museum Wales, Bristol Museums, Leeds Museums and the Challenger Project by RAMM in Exeter, have shown improved understanding of collections – often beyond their own institution – and the development of particular skill sets, including digital expertise and specimen conservation.
- Other instances of capacity building which enabled a deeper understanding of collections feature at another TWAM gallery (Laing), where additional curatorial know-how has brought the creation of new shows in-house, and at Beamish Museum, where the grant's focus on contextual curating enabled the gathering of local intelligence to inform the interpretation and presentation of collections.

Through these new posts and skill sets, we have seen organisations' capacity for knowledge dissemination increase:

- All of the projects with a digital component supported by the Fund have had a positive impact on dissemination – unsurprisingly, given their nature – by making objects easier to locate and study by researchers at other institutions (including overseas), as well as improved public accessibility.
- In Sheffield, the new curator made a tangible difference to the programme of public engagement around the 'Going Public' programme, which would not otherwise have been possible.

But equally, institutions have also been able to retain and protect knowledge:

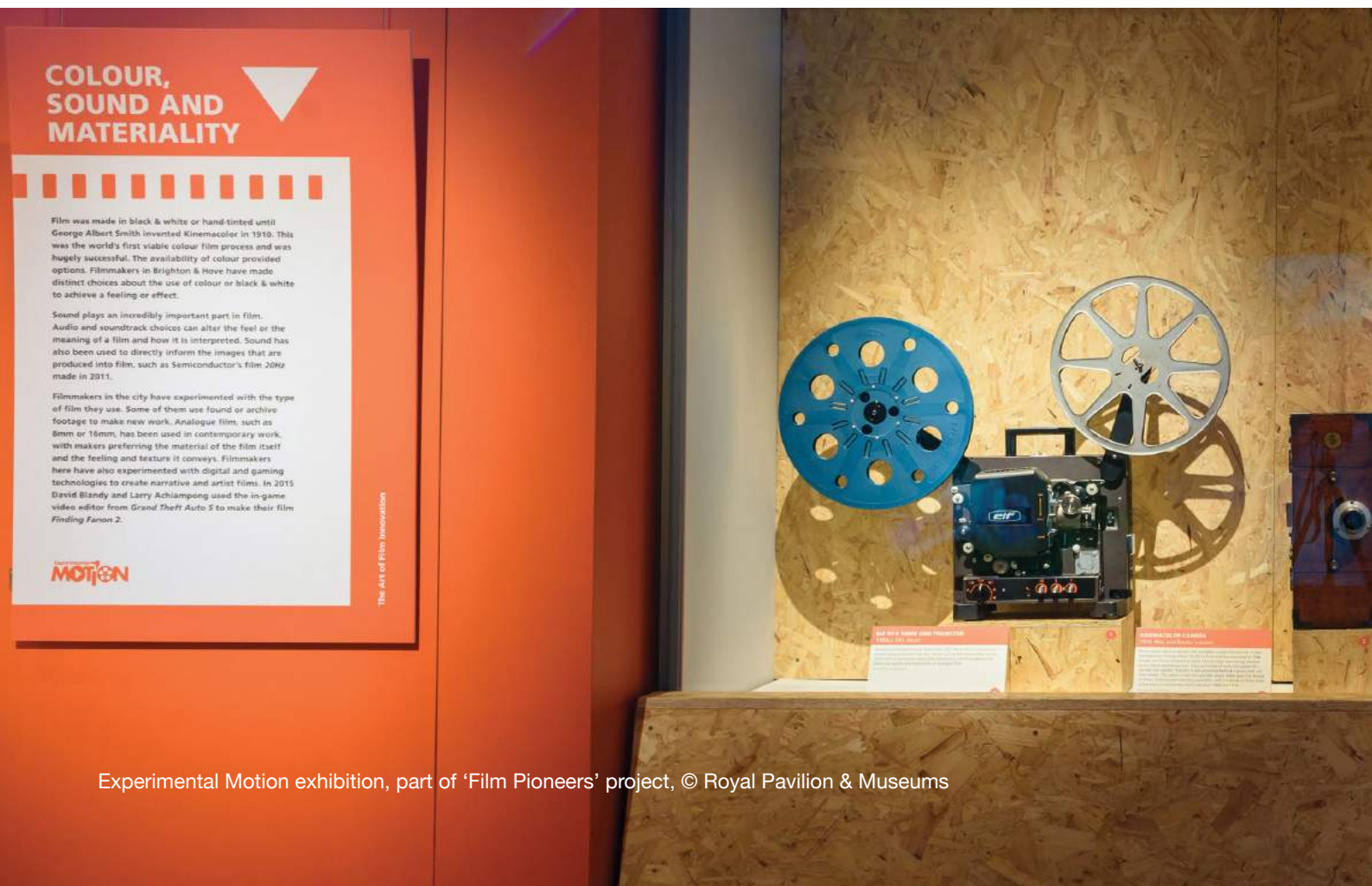
- Both of the digital projects outlined in section 6.4 (RAMM Exeter and the NIRP in the North project at Glasgow University) not only captured new knowledge, but also created websites to preserve and disseminate this knowledge. In the NIRP in the North project, the additional capacity to undertake research of the old master collections came from freelancers, rather than in-house staff or new members of the internal team. Each researcher has since moved on to new projects around the world.
- In the Potteries Museum and Gallery at Stoke, the recruitment of a trainee curator has helped to protect knowledge within the institution, which would have been lost due to the retirement of senior curatorial staff.

- Work at Falmouth has expanded the skills in boat conservation that are available to the museum and brought additional capacity and expertise to the maintenance of the small boats register. Both strands of activity have also led to improved engagement with and retention of the volunteers who are essential to this work.

## 7.2 Wider institutional benefits

Changes resulting from new posts and improved skills led to organisations developing increased institutional confidence. Some grants were explicitly directed towards supporting organisational resilience, leading to clear long-term benefits:

- In Blackpool, the appointment of a Collections Officer at the Grundy Gallery has strengthened procedures and put the correct protocols in place for managing their collection into the future. The post was also made permanent, reflecting its importance.
- The grant to the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in Stoke is both protecting curatorial knowledge and skills and adding capacity as staff retire.
- In Newcastle, support for the Laing Gallery was closely tied to developing a stronger business model, which will provide useful experience across TWAM and beyond.



Funding applications have also flowed from greater curatorial capacity, because of additional headroom and increased confidence:

- The grant to Gainsborough’s House shows how an injection of curatorial capacity contributed to the conceptual development of a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for major capital funding.
- In Cumbria, work by the Cumbrian Museum Consortium supported smaller museums to make applications for funding, resulting in successful bids and strengthening ties within the network.
- In Blackpool, staff at the Grundy Gallery said that the impact of the funding for curatorial support improved confidence within the organisation, resulting in further successful bids.

Combined with increased confidence, institutions’ enhanced status has in some cases led to improvements in collections, through acquisitions and loans:

- At Gainsborough’s House one of the major outcomes of the curatorial activities was loans and acquisitions of work from two significant collections. Staff saw this as a sign of greater confidence in the institution.
- In Brighton, new artist relationships developed through the ‘Experimental Motion’ show have led to new acquisitions for the film and media collection, as well as moving image works for the visual arts collection. Improved understanding of the media and film collection has enabled a more focused approach to the collection’s expansion.



- At the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, the 'Basic Design' project strengthened the collection by contacting alumni of the art school and securing new artefacts for inclusion in the archive.

Public engagement has been improved in several cases, through work done by new team members, or as a result of the project itself:

- The volunteer commitment for the 'Waste Land' project at Turner Contemporary is the prime example of an initiative that has altered the nature of the gallery's relationship with volunteers and the community.
- In Falmouth, public engagement with the workshop was supported through social media, which the Trainee Boat Curator took on alongside his role in the museum.
- In Brighton, the appointee for a job to catalogue the collection undertook public talks in the museum and created a pop-up cinema event in a local cafe. The exhibition on 'Experimental Motion' attracted new audiences to the film and media collection and the Brighton Museum, particularly among young people.
- Similarly in Manchester, the Early Career Curator, hired primarily for cataloguing and documentation work, become involved in public-facing work, including workshops and a conference, as well as community engagement.
- In Belfast, the introduction of a guest curator programme has brought new artists into the MAC, improving the range of public offering and moving away from what the senior curator described as the 'singular voice' of an individual curator.

Work with volunteers has been enhanced substantially in many cases. Often this has resulted from the capacity for this work being enhanced by a new role, coupled with the energy and innovation brought by a new post-holder. Volunteers were at the heart of many projects:

- Turner Contemporary and the Beamish Museum both use radical new approaches for engaging volunteers, which were extended as part of the curatorial projects.
- In York, a major aspect of the Collections Facilitator's role was working with large numbers of volunteers. Some were involved in digitisation and cataloguing, with others front-of-house in a new ceramics gallery space, acting as guides to the objects on display.
- In Falmouth, we have seen a significant impact on volunteers from the energy of the two new post-holders.

Links with local communities have been strengthened:



- Work in Manchester was conceived as a means to develop better links with local Muslim communities. Ahead of the Manchester Museum's new South Asia gallery opening in 2020, contacts within the community will inform the programme and content of the new gallery.
- Activities at Gainsborough's House, resulting from the revamped curatorial approach and appointment of the Keeper of Art and Place (such as local walks and exhibition tickets to local silk-making companies), led to stronger links with the local community and businesses.
- In Margate, several aspects of Turner Contemporary's 'Waste Land' project, including creative development and elements of the show itself, were purposely shifted away from the gallery and into the town, fostering new links with local people and businesses.

Gaining external accreditation was an important step up for some:

- At the Grundy in Blackpool the Collections Manager streamlined the governance and storage of all collections across the museum holdings. A Collections Management Framework has been adopted by the council and the collections will secure accreditation following the opening of the new museum – during the period of the grant this moved from its original proposed site in the historic Winter Gardens to be located in the new 5 \* hotel which is being developed in the town centre.
- Part of the work at Orkney Natural History Museum is to gain recognition as a collection of national significance.
- The 2018 grant to Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service includes seeking designation of its natural history collection.

Finally, much of the work funded led to a higher organisational profile, for example:

- Gainsborough's House, with help from the new Keeper of Art and Place, has strengthened its reputation within its area, achieving significant increases in collections and major loans.
- The Senior Curator at Bristol Museums, Isla Gladstone, observed that the organisation's reputation was enhanced as it took on more of a leading role as the key institution in the South West.
- In Manchester, Stephen Welsh spoke about the benefit of raising not just people's skills but their confidence as curators, enabling them to work effectively with the Islamic art collections and engage with local communities.

## 7.3 Curatorial skills beyond the museum

Several examples of funded work led to new networks, which enabled the impact of strengthened curatorship in one museum to extend to others: The Royal Pavilion and Museums Brighton (film and media); National Museum Wales (mollusca); Leeds (geology).

In some cases, knowledge and skills were shared across geographical networks:

- The Cumbria Museums Consortium shows how support for a local network has benefited a group of smaller organisations, whose interactions with the network have been strengthened.
- The National Army Museum's support increased the number of regional networks of regimental museums, enabling improved skill-sharing.
- The skills development programme introduced by Bristol Museums was made available to museums throughout the South West.
- Gainsborough's House, in conjunction with the extension of its space, has taken a lead role in creating new alliances across Suffolk – supported in part by the additional capacity introduced through the new role of Keeper of Art and Place.
- The addition of curatorial capacity at Bowes Museum helped develop a regional collaboration with Auckland Castle and Durham University to build the North East's reputation for Spanish Art.

New academic partnerships, supporting research and further learning, were initiated at some institutions as a result of work funded:

- In York, a new collaborative ceramics PhD has been launched.
- The Hatton Gallery, attached to the Newcastle University's Fine Art Department, is now working more closely with academic departments.
- In Brighton a new collaboration with the University of Sussex developed out of the work on 'Experimental Motion', with an offshoot of the exhibition at the Royal Pavilion and Museum held on the university campus.
- In Manchester, links have been forged with the John Rylands Library collections and other Islamic collections in the UK and beyond.



Filming a legacy handbook as part of the 'South West Museums Natural Science' project,  
© Bristol Museums Development Trust



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## 8. Conclusions

This report illustrates how directing funding to the curatorial core of a museum or gallery has a positive influence throughout the organisation and beyond. The stories of how the work funded has played out illustrate how the impact can be transformational – for people working in curatorial roles, for the collections they work with and for the institutions they work for.

Most important are the public benefits. This report includes examples of work which has placed the public right at the heart of the institution. The importance of curatorial capacity to engage with volunteers is a recurring theme in many of the stories outlined here, and in many cases a stronger internal sense of collections translates into better public engagement and links with the locality and region. While much of the ‘under-the-bonnet’ work supported through the Fund may have been invisible to the public, it is this unseen contribution that is shown to be so powerful.

### 8.1 Impact of new people

Bringing new people with skills and talents from other fields or disciplines into an organisation, often in their first curatorial role, has had a significant impact on the work funded.

This chimes with calls for greater workforce diversification for the museums sector, where some have pointed to a lack of opportunities for young people to gain experience through paid work. Several accounts in this report feature individuals who have thrived when taking up curatorial responsibilities for the first time. They have stressed the value of opportunities to gain paid experience over an extended period, typically through a fixed term contract, which in several cases led to permanent employment. The Fund therefore created and led to genuine career opportunities.

Several of the interviews with participants in these projects show the pride felt by managers who have been able to provide opportunities for junior colleagues. One curator who oversaw a project said: ‘It’s wonderful to line manage someone and be able to say yes to things’. Beyond this, the additional capacity provided by a second pair of hands has often freed up time for thinking,

planning and creative development for more senior curators – indeed others have commented that having an ‘extra brain’ also made a big difference.

## 8.2 ‘Under-the-bonnet’ work

In interviews, several people noted the benefits of the relative freedom of the application process. Some observed that other funding is linked to an exhibition or object, whereas this funding was often for the less visible side of work in museums and galleries. One participant described it as investing in ‘the core’, with effects seen in the long term rather than immediately; another praised this support for ‘under-the-bonnet’ work.

Often, the focus of activity supported by the Museums and Galleries Fund was not glamorous. As one interviewee explained: “In the last ten years in the context of cuts to funding it has been better to have really attractive displays and exhibitions than to consider what the state of the stores looks like, or how well documented the collection is”. The work of photographing, cataloguing and updating databases, which several of the junior posts created through the Fund are required to do, is mostly invisible to the visiting public, yet makes a huge difference to the accessibility and interpretation of collections.

## 8.3 Role of national museums

The Museums and Galleries Fund is generally concerned with non-national institutions. However, in a small number of cases, national organisations were directly involved with the work, often as a partner but in some cases as a grantee. Tate supports several of the Fund’s grantees through the Plus Tate network and as a lender of work to galleries outside London (such as through the ‘Passeur’ project, for which it received a grant).

The Natural History Museum appears in two projects concerned with natural sciences, both as an active sharer of skills with National Museum Wales, and as host to some of the HMS Challenger materials. The National Army Museum was funded for its work with the UK-wide network of regimental and military museums. While not a national organisation, the MAC in Belfast was able to demonstrate leadership in addressing a strategic need within the context of the curation of contemporary art in Northern Ireland. In the 2018 round, the ‘Natural science across Scotland’ project sees National Museums Scotland working with some 40 museums across the country.

These examples highlight the huge significance of the role of national institutions in supporting the development and training of curators at regional level. However, this is not always a one-way process: in the case of the Challenger project, there was much for the larger organisation to learn from the grant holder in Exeter. The body of work detailed in this report is testament to the drive and imagination of institutions throughout the UK, who have developed a range of creative and innovative approaches to developing skills and collections expertise, and in many instances exhibited generosity and leadership by sharing these with partners and colleagues.

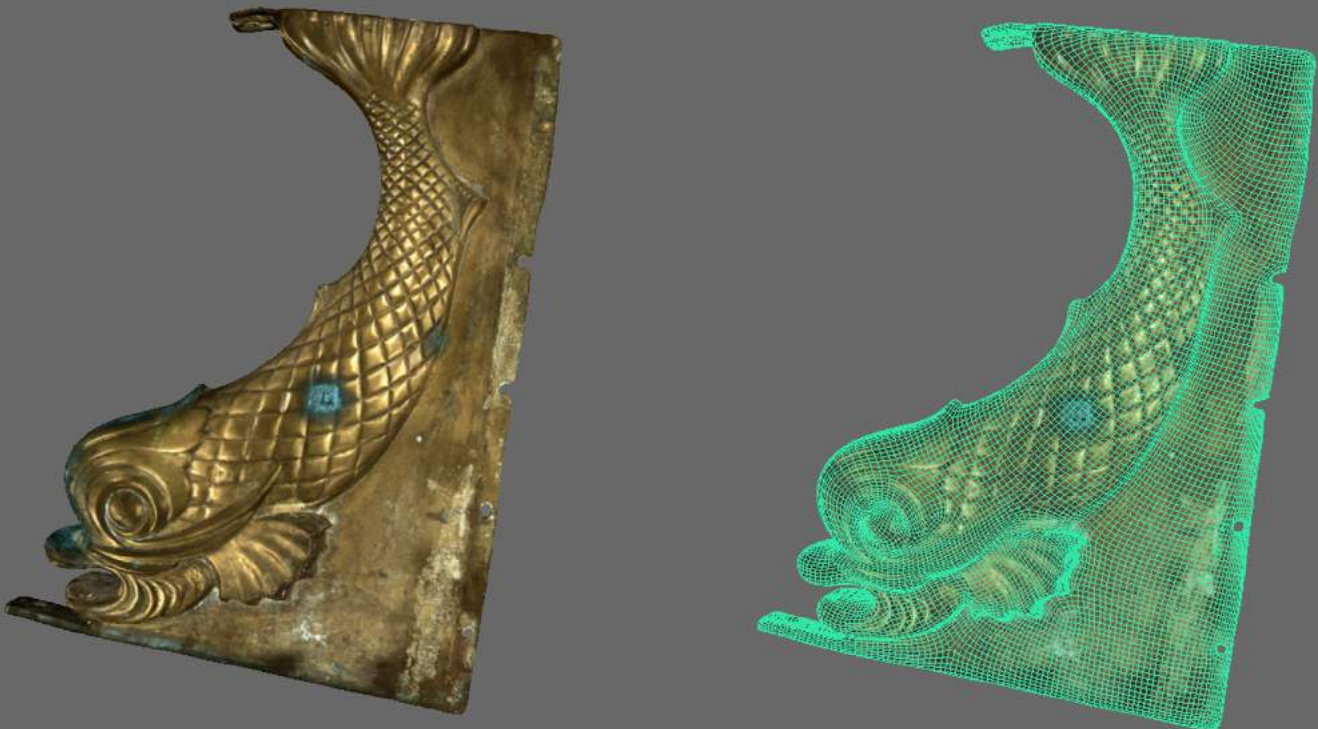
## 8.4 Funding for skills

A consistent theme from speaking to recipients of this funding has been their appreciation of the opportunity to focus on curatorial skills. For some practicing professionals, working in a context where time and resources are scarce, it has provided a means to refresh key competencies and meet urgent needs. For several early career curators, it has provided opportunities to start work in a field that they find inspiring.

This report points to the benefits for institutions as well as individuals of investment in skills. Outcomes for organisations, sometimes unforeseen, have related to their reputation within the sector, regionally and with key stakeholder groups, which in turn affect organisational strength and resilience.

This report's findings demonstrate the range of benefits that have flowed from investment in curatorship at museums and galleries. It is hoped that the outcomes listed here will demonstrate the potential of continued investment in curatorship in the UK's museums and galleries.

Support for developing and enhancing the skills and knowledge of curators, and providing training opportunities for early and mid-career curators, can lead to greater understanding and interpretation of the scientific, cultural and historical value of collections - for current and future generations.



## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Museums & Galleries Fund:

#### Details of Grants 2014-18

##### Round 1 - March 2014:

##### 7 grants totalling £629,419 were awarded to:

##### **Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool**

£135,000 over three years towards the salary of the Collections Officer.

The post holder will research and manage Blackpool's historic illuminations collection as part of the wider plan to create a museum dedicated to the town's history.

##### **Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter**

£91,930 over two years, towards the costs of a project reuniting HMS

Challenger materials dispersed across the UK. The Curator of Natural History, supported by a trainee, will work with other museums which have parts of the Challenger collection to collate and upload the data into a searchable, on-line database. In the long term it is hoped others will contribute details of their own collections.

##### **Leeds Museums - Discovery Centre**

£112,000 over three years towards the salary of an Assistant Geology Curator.

The post holder will work with experts to better understand the collection, and also with ten smaller museums with geology collections to help them enhance their collections and build links across the network.

##### **Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC), Belfast**

A single grant of £82,825 towards the costs of the Visual Art Programme. The MAC plans to share its facilities, experience and the skills of its curatorial team through a professional development programme for curators.



### **Tyne & Wear Museums & Archives**

£82,264 over 15 months towards the costs of researching the Basic Design archive and curating an exhibition at the Hatton Gallery, in the University of Newcastle. The Hatton's curator will research the collection, contact alumni of the Fine Art School and work with Tate to develop the exhibition.

### **University of Glasgow**

£45,000 over two years towards the costs of The National Inventory Research Project – 'NIRP in the North'. The University's School of Culture and Creative Arts will work with National Museums Liverpool, Manchester Art Gallery, Leeds Museums and Galleries and York Art Gallery, to research and publish online the pre-1900 European old master paintings in their collections.

### **York Museums Trust**

£80,400 over three years towards the costs of a Collections Facilitator for the British Studio Ceramic collection in York Art Gallery. The post holder will work closely with the curator to improve access to the collection, develop its digitisation, and support the Specialist Subject Network.

### **Round 2 - March 2015: 6 grants totalling £539,062 were awarded to:**

#### **Bowes Museum**

£89,250 over three years towards the salary of an early-career curator of Fine Art to work closely with the Auckland Castle curatorial team and Durham University to research the collections, disseminate the learning and raise the profile of Spanish Art in Co. Durham.

#### **Bristol Museums Development Trust**

£85,425 over two years towards the costs of South West Museums Natural Sciences Project, a dedicated programme of training and professional development to enhance curatorial skills across the region.

#### **Gainsborough's House Trust**

£84,000 over three years towards core costs, specifically the salary of the 'Keeper of Art & Place' to develop the 'Art in Suffolk' initiative with museums across the county, by sharing professional art curatorial skills and training to help the county's museums make the best use of their art collections.

#### **Lakeland Arts**

£90,000 over three years towards the Cumbria Museums Consortium Curatorial Skills Development Programme, which will provide training, share knowledge to strengthen collection care and improve the management of loans by museums across the region.

#### **Manchester Museums Partnership**

£97,882 over two years towards a programme of curatorial development, to enhance knowledge, skills and confidence in the use of the four partner museums' collections of Islamic art, fabric and other objects.

### **Royal Pavilion & Museums**

£92,505 over two years towards the 'Film Pioneers' project, to understand and display better this important film and media collection which illustrates the seminal role Brighton and Hove played in film-making in the 1890s and early 1900s.

### **Round 3 - March 2016: 6 grants totalling £503,317 were awarded to:**

#### **Beamish Museum**

£78,000 over three years towards the costs of curatorial activity in the "Remaking Beamish" project, which aims to create authentic and immersive settings that are representative of the North East.

#### **National Army Museum**

£66,085 over two years towards the costs of supporting a national network of regional army museums to broaden audiences, share good practice and support curatorial development.

#### **National Maritime Museum Cornwall Trust**

£95,172 over two years towards the costs of curating the nation's small boats collection and addressing under-provision in the care, conservation and interpretation of historic small boats and crafts.

#### **National Museum Wales**

£92,950 over two years towards the costs of training and assisting curatorial staff at six museums across the UK to research in partnership with the Natural History Museum, categorise and interpret the molluscs in their natural history collections.

#### **The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent**

£81,110 over three years towards the salary of a full-time assistant curator to develop the Local History collections, increase access to those collections and ensure the transfer of curatorial knowledge.

#### **Turner Contemporary**

£90,000 over three years towards the costs of developing an innovative, audience-led curatorial approach to enable community members to shape the programme.

### **Round 4 - March 2017: 6 grants totalling £496,129 were awarded to:**

#### **Museums Sheffield**

£99,000 over 3 years towards the costs of the next phase of the Going Public project which aims to research and develop relationships between private and civic collections and philanthropists, especially in fine art.

## Orkney Natural History Society

£75,078 over 3 years towards the salaries of a new Collections Development Team to strengthen the curatorial capacity of Stromness Museum.

## Silk Heritage Trust, Macclesfield

£99,000 over 3 years towards the salary of the Director and costs associated with improving the care, access and documentation of the collections held by Paradise Mill and the Silk Museum.

## Tate Foundation

£90,903 over 3 years towards the costs of a touring and registrarial skills training programme with four regional partner organisations, centred around *Le Passeur 1881* by William Stott of Oldham.

## Tyne & Wear Museums & Archives

£86,148 over 2.5 years towards the costs of a development and exhibitions project at the Laing Art Gallery, which will provide a new model of researching, curating and touring exhibitions for local authority museums.

## Watts Gallery

£46,000 over 2 years towards the salary of a new Curator of Landscape to develop and implement a coherent vision for the different sites comprising the Artists' Village.

## Round 5 - May 2018: 6 grants totalling £496,819 were awarded to:

### Colchester and Ipswich Museums

£87,255 over 3 years towards the costs of the Evolving our Natural Science project, to transform organisational understanding of four natural science collections and develop their in-house curatorial expertise.



Louisa Brouwer, Keeper of Art and Place, briefing staff and volunteers on the collection © Gainsborough's House

### **Dorset County Museum**

£90,172 over 3 years towards the salary of a new Curatorial Director, to lead on the curation of four new permanent galleries, boosting organisational curatorial capacity.

### **Gainsborough’s House Trust**

£30,000 over 1 year towards the salary of the Keeper of Art and Place to maintain curatorial skills and collections-based work and continue the 'Art in Suffolk' initiative with museums across the county.

### **Holburne Museum of Art**

£89,431 over 3 years towards the salary of a Contemporary Curator, a new post shared between the Holburne and The Edge at the University of Bath, to develop innovative approaches to curating contemporary art.

### **National Museums Scotland**

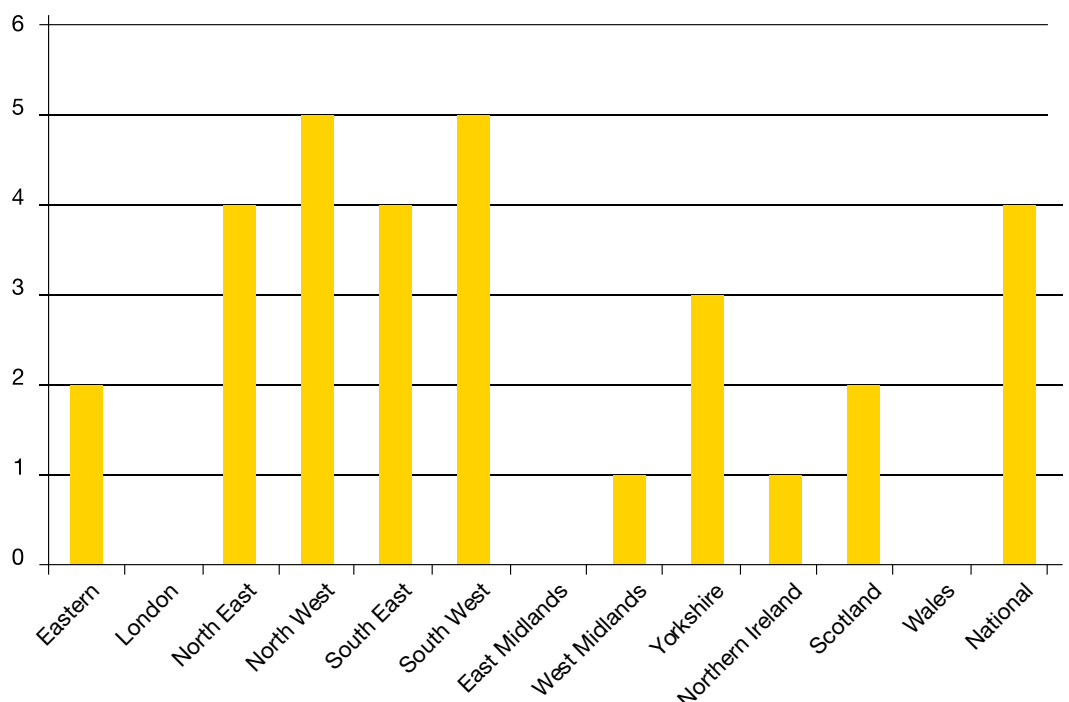
£107,000 over 2 years towards the costs of the Natural Science across Scotland project, providing a curatorial training and support programme to over 40 local partner museums.

### **Woodhorn Charitable Trust**

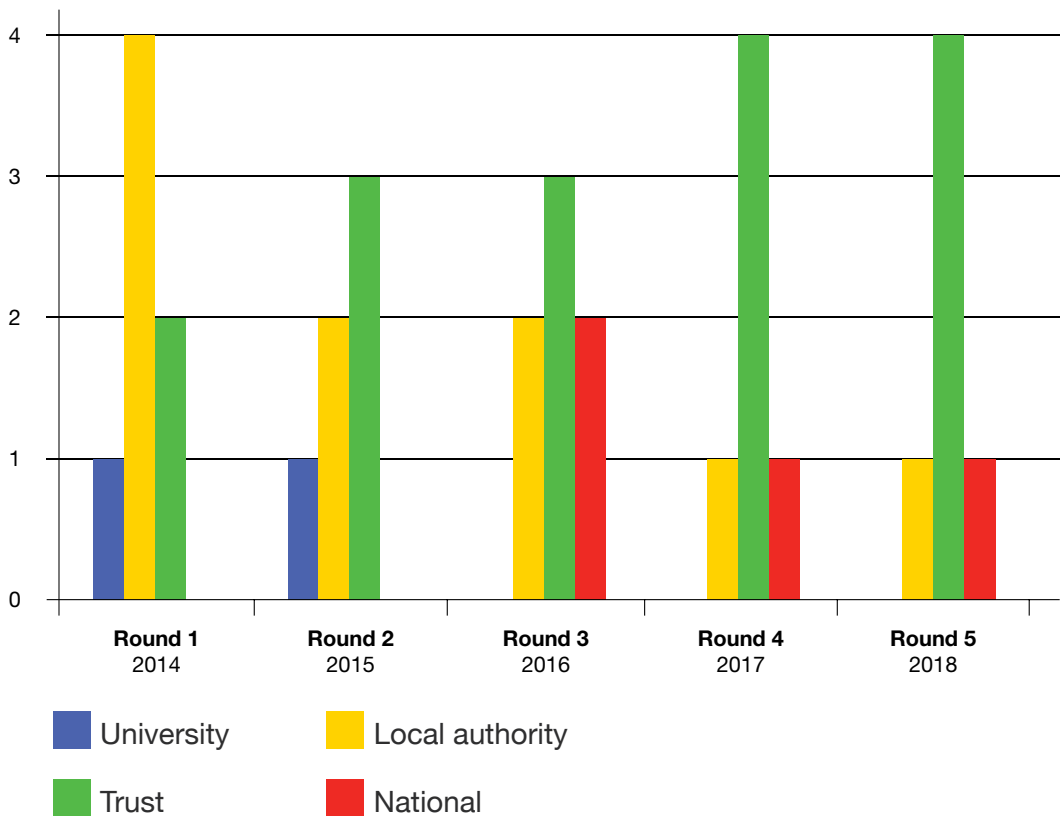
£92,961 over 2 years towards the salary of a Project Curator, to provide a programme of collection care training to staff and volunteers across the Trust's four Northumberland sites.

## 9.2 Analysis of grants by geography, type of institution and posts created

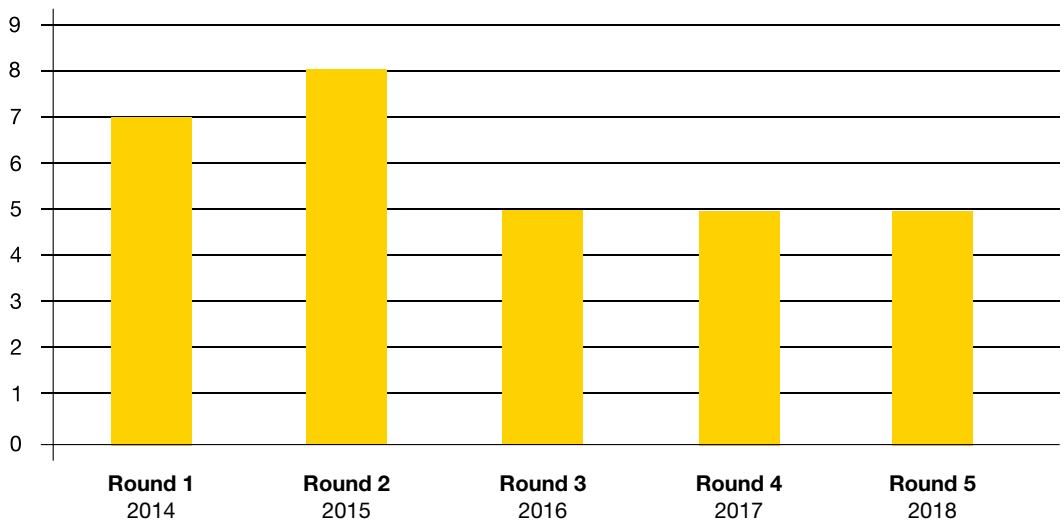
### Geographic spread of approved MGF grants to 2018



### Type of institution



### New posts created



# Acknowledgements

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Front cover: Journeys with *The Waste Land* at Turner Contemporary (top left) Digital panel: Wall of Pots, Courtesy of York Museums Trust Image © Gareth Buddo (top right) Talismanic Shirt, hand painted on cotton. Turkey. 19th century, Courtesy of Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester, Image © Michael Pollard (bottom left) Antarctic prion (*Pachyptila vittata*), gathered by the HMS Challenger expedition, January 1874, Kerguelen Islands. © National Museums Liverpool (bottom right)

Inside front cover: Visit to National Museums Scotland to explore Islamic collections and meet with curatorial staff, Courtesy of Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester, Image © Michael Pollard

Opposite page: Hatton Gallery, University of Newcastle, © Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums





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