
Forward Plan

Pitt Rivers Museum Policy and Planning
Committee, February 2015



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Forward Plan
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

Governing body: The Visitors of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Date approved by governing body: 20 April 2015 (via circulation)

Date at which policy is due for review: April 2020

Mission

“The Pitt Rivers Museum aspires to be the best university museum of anthropology and archaeology in the world, using its unique galleries as a focus for exemplary teaching and research and as an inspirational forum for the sharing of cultural knowledge amongst the widest possible public.”

1 Introduction

The Pitt Rivers Museum cares for the University of Oxford’s collections of anthropological and world archaeological materials. These number some 600,000 items, and include artefacts, photographs, manuscript collections, audio recordings, and a small collection of film. All the collections are Designated as of national/international significance. The Museum is celebrated for its period atmosphere and artefact-rich permanent displays which are distinctively arranged primarily by type and by function, rather than by geography or culture.

The Museum is established on one main site, housing both its galleries and most of its facilities, with one major and two subsidiary off-site facilities where the research collections are held. The sites are owned by the University of Oxford, and all are held on a long-term basis, or on the basis that appropriate alternatives will be provided should the Museum be asked to move.

Recent years have seen a number of major capital and curatorial projects which have helped the Museum win a range of awards including a Queen’s Anniversary Prize (in conjunction with the University’s other collections), the inaugural Clore Prize for Museum Learning (jointly with the Natural History Museum), and the American Anthropological Association’s Ames prize for innovative museum anthropology. The Museum is a major research and teaching resource (it possesses one of the country’s best anthropology libraries) both for the University of Oxford and for the many scholars and higher education institutes in the UK and abroad who make use of its displays and collections. Numbers of visitors have almost trebled in the last decade to over 420,000, while the Museum’s website receives over a million unique visits from people in nearly every country in the world.

The emphasis in this forward plan is upon consolidating and sustaining these major advances, in the light of the constrained financial situation and the fragility of the diverse funding streams on which the Museum depends.

Development of the plan

The Forward Plan has been developed in the light of commitments the Museum has already made as a condition of receiving funding from the various sources which currently support it. These include the University of Oxford, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Arts Council England (ACE), the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and a range of other philanthropic, curatorial and research sources. Successful application to such sources has in turn required the Museum to consult a very broad external set of users and potential users via independent audience surveys, project steering groups and an electronic kiosk in the Museum, with attention paid also to comments in the Museum's visitors' book and TripAdvisor ratings. The Forward Plan has also been produced in consultation with the Museum's senior staff committee and approved by its governing body, its Visitors.

Period covered by the plan

The period covered includes the current and following year, with certain objectives looking ahead to 2018 and beyond.

2 Purpose

As given in the University of Oxford's regulations, the Museum's purpose is 'to assemble, preserve, and exhibit the Pitt Rivers Collection and to promote the public understanding of anthropology and world archaeology, and their teaching and research, based on the museum's collections'.

3 Review of the previous Forward Plan

In recent years, the University has required the Museum to provide its annual forward plans in a format designed primarily for its academic departments and to demonstrate required budgetary savings. These are less informative than is a review against the Museum's previous strategic forward plan (prepared for the last Accreditation round). This hinged around a number distinct capital and other grant-funded developments.

With one main exception (detailed below), these developments have been accomplished. An £8m new extension has been constructed, doing much to centralise the Museum's hitherto scattered estate, and providing a range of previously-lacking visitor facilities and improved curatorial spaces. Subsequently, a £1.6m award from the HLF and other supporters allowed the Museum to redevelop its entrance and install equipment to stabilise the Museum's environment. Both projects greatly enhanced access for those with mobility difficulties. A series of research council and Leverhulme-funded awards has also supported major advances in documenting the collections more fully and making them accessible online. Membership first of the southeast 'Hub', and more recently as part of a Major Partner Museum (MPM) consortium, has enabled the Pitt Rivers to progress towards achieving the range of goals for which Renaissance funding is awarded. Currently, *VERVE*, a further £1.5m project supported by the HLF, the University and

by other donors, is contributing to an innovative outreach programme and to the goal of bringing back into display unlit or neglected case runs on all three gallery floors.

The one substantial unmet goal specified in the last strategic Forward Plan is the intention to consolidate in a single shared Collections Study Centre the undisplayed collections held by all four University museums. This has been delayed by the ambition to obtain a reasonably central site and by the difficulty (post financial crisis) in raising the major funding needed to support the construction and maintenance of such a facility. While it is beyond the Pitt Rivers Museum's capacity to resolve this issue on its own, planning is once again moving forward with the University, though a full solution is likely only in the medium term.

4 Analysis of the Museum's operating environment

Strengths

- The Museum's distinctive galleries, with their unusual arrangement by type and by function, and the global reputation they have earned (*The Times* newspaper ranked the Pitt Rivers as the 11th best museum in the world in May 2013).
- The great range and depth of the collections.
- The high number of visitors (423,000 for the calendar year 2013-14) and their high reported satisfaction level.
- The close links (reflected in joint posts and jointly-taught degrees) with the University's academic departments.
- The close links with Oxford University's other three museums (which along with the Pitt Rivers constitute an ACE Major Partner Museum) and with the University's collections more widely. These links are formalised through the University's Academic Services Strategy Group led by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Correspondingly, the Museum is able to draw upon the University's wider Estates, Development, Personnel, IT, Legal and other services.
- The Museum's dedicated and well-qualified staff and its supportive Friends' and volunteers organisations.

Weaknesses

- The low numbers of staff given the size and the significance of the collections, especially in the light of the high level of demand for public, teaching, research and loan use of those collections.
- The Museum's dependence on continual applications to insecure external funding streams to support both the level of activity and the Museum's infrastructural renewal.

- The inadequate space and storage conditions for the collections not currently on display, and the present lack of resources to fully document and move them to the planned Collections Study Centre.
- Limitations on the Museum's capacity to raise commercial income, imposed by the Museum's dense case layout, its modest-sized lecture theatre, lack of open internal space suitable for hire and the Museum's location behind Oxford University's Natural History Museum with which it is often confused in the public mind.
- The constraints imposed by Grade 1 listed status of building and displays.

Opportunities

- The Museum's greatly improved and centralised estate, offering enhanced potential for teaching and research collaboration with Oxford University departments and higher education institutes worldwide.
- The potential to integrate the use of the collections more deeply in teaching and research, within the University, nationally and internationally, both physically and digitally, provided the resources needed to do this can be secured.
- The opportunity to deepen collaboration with the University's other museums, sharing resources where appropriate, in particular in relation to our joint Major Partner Museum commitments to excellence.
- The potential to increase philanthropic funding in the medium term.
- The potential to capitalise further on the much-increased number of visitors to boost donations and sales.
- The potential represented by the planned Collections Study Centre for all the University's museums.

Threats

- The increased competition for academic, curatorial and philanthropic grants, given the constrained economic climate.
- Over-commitment by an institution which functions at a scale beyond its assured funding, and which relies on continual grant applications to sustain itself at its current level.
- The risk that the resources needed to plan and move its research collections to the intended Collections Study Centre will be insufficient to make best use of the opportunity.

- Failure to continue to attract appropriately qualified and dedicated staff, as senior staff retire.

Mitigation in the event of reduction or cessation of external funding: different levels of mitigation are possible, depending on the degree of reduction in funding. The University's grant secures the exterior of the buildings the Museum occupies and funds the core administrative, curatorial and conservation staff. Depending on the level and nature of a reduction in external funding, the Museum's opening hours, its education service, outreach, digital provision, loan and exhibition programme would all necessarily be correspondingly reduced.

5 Consultation and analysis of views

This Forward Plan is informed by a wide range of direct and indirect consultation and views, as well as by the commitments given by the Museum to the different funders who support it both on longer and project-based terms. Visitor opinion is obtained via self-completion kiosk data, ACORN analysis, feedback forms from particular events, focus and project steering-group contributions, visitor book comments and mystery shopping conducted via Oxford University museums' joint membership of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions.

Independently-monitored, self-completion kiosk returns show data including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, residence, whether the visit is first time and satisfaction rating (currently, 58% excellent, 28% very good, and 5.5% good). The Museum's current five year Heritage Lottery funded programme *VERVE* is targeted to address identified shortcomings. The Museum is always in the top three of the 100+ attractions in Oxford City and University (which include the Ashmolean Museum, the University itself, the Bodleian Library etc.). The 1 million+ unique visits which Google Analytics show the Museum's website receives come from nearly 200 countries worldwide.

The most frequent visitor criticisms revolve around the need for improved lighting which has and continues to be addressed by a combination of grant-funded and University initiatives, and the lack of a café (now corrected, courtesy of the adjoining Natural History Museum). The most frequent visitor plea is that that the Museum should preserve its distinctive atmosphere and unusual mode of displaying its collections, one of the goals of the current Heritage Lottery funded programme *VERVE*.

6 Key aims, specific objectives and means of achievement

6.1 Display and interpretation

The Museum will continue the renewal, in Pitt Rivers' style, of the Museum's celebrated permanent displays and maintain the programme of innovative temporary exhibitions, community and artist installations. This will be achieved through:

- installing a new display of the Museum's Cook-voyage collections in a major new case on the Lower Gallery (summer 2015);

- completing the installation of a case run of new permanent displays devoted to crafts in the Museum's Lower Gallery (late autumn 2015);
- commissioning and installing new cases (in place of the current makeshift ones) in which to re-display the relevant part of the Museum's collection of model artefacts (Spring 2016);
- installing two major case runs of new displays devoted to the Museum's hunter-gatherer and world archaeology collections in the Upper Gallery, including an introduction to General Pitt-Rivers and his typological system (early 2018);
- generating a new gallery-wide thread of interpretation based on the theme of human ingenuity, design, craftsmanship and performance (early 2018);
- continuing the Museum's lively programme of photographic exhibitions ('Architecture for all: the photography of Paul Oliver' opens in May 2015);
- resuming the Museum's programme of special exhibitions (from 2018, once the gallery is returned to display use from its current use for display preparation).

6.2 Access and learning

The Museum will continue its commitment to encouraging engagement with the collections by the widest possible audience via its programme of school visits, its outreach programme, volunteering and increased digital access. This will be achieved through:

- sustaining the diverse programme of formal and informal learning opportunities, including free or low-cost active participation in craft activities (for example, by autumn 2017, a total of c.8,000 people will have taken part in the annual summer celebration, Pitt Fest);
- sustaining levels of booked group visits, with continuing focus on target groups (25,024 people visited the Museum as part of a booked group in 2013-14);
- maintaining and extending access to collections information (including online collections databases and associated images) for staff, researchers and other users;
- installing public Wi-Fi throughout the galleries (spring 2015);
- upgrading the Museum's HTML website to CMS to improve the regularity of updated content, greater responsiveness to users' devices, and enhance connectivity to social media, blogs and multimedia content (autumn 2015);

- continuing to develop a coordinated education service across the University collections, and work with the University's widening access team to deliver hands-on workshops to target secondary schools (80 sessions per year);
- continuing to develop online digital resources for GCSE, A level and Higher Education art groups, building on the success of the *Art Handbook*, the *Creative Connections* resources and the use of digital media in the Museum, doubling the digital resources available (by 2018).
- continuing to work with the Oxford University Museums Collections Volunteers Service to develop opportunities offering enhanced involvement, responsibility and variety (such as takeover events and advisory groups);
- sustaining the Museum's commitment to participate creatively in local civic initiatives such as Oxford's *Open Doors* and *White Night* events.

6.3 Collections care and management

The Museum will sustain the improvements made over the course of the previous Forward Plan to collections accessibility, care and documentation, continuing to add selectively to the collections where space and funding permit and assessing against strict criteria the case for the retention of certain existing collections which might be better placed elsewhere. This will be achieved through:

- planning for, preparing collections to migrate to, and moving into, the new Collections Study Centre to house the undisplayed collections held by the four University museums (timescale dependent on support for move and identification of site);
- maintaining and developing the catalogue databases to meet and exceed SPECTRUM standards;
- upgrading the documentation of individual objects and whole collections as part of everyday collections work;
- seeking funding to catalogue individually those collections currently covered by bulk entries, and tackling other areas of backlog with the aim of eliminating the backlog entirely by 2028.
- continuing to develop the digital image bank for objects in the collection (target of 95,000 (40%) of object records to be illustrated by 2020);
- continuing to apply to relevant funding streams for digital infrastructure and content to increase the percentage of collections and records digitally available;
- sustaining interventive and preventive conservation programmes; communicating conservation practice via an exhibition on original repair methods used by communities

around the world, including a program of related events and workshops (summer/autumn 2015);

- developing further conservation training for staff and the wider museum community in materials identification and collections care initiatives (spring 2016);
- continuing to add selectively to collections, subject to space and funding;
- reviewing (against Museum criteria) particular collections for potential deaccession (autumn 2015).
- continuing to apply to curatorial funding streams (including Designation Development Fund, Esmée Fairbairn and Heritage Lottery Fund) for distinctive projects to enhance collections care and management.

6.4 *Museum-based teaching and research*

The Museum will sustain its record of participation in, and support for, teaching and research, locally, nationally and internationally. This will be achieved through:

- continuing to submit innovative grant applications to Research Councils and similar bodies (in 2015 two members of Museum staff will commence work on separate Leverhulme-funded projects, while another will learn the outcome of a bid to the AHRC to support 24 PhD studentships to work on the collections of Oxford University's four museums);
- Maintain the direct and indirect contributions by academic and other Museum staff to Oxford University's degrees including, amongst others, the undergraduate degree in archaeology and anthropology and the postgraduate degree in Visual, Material and Museum Anthropology (MSc and MPhil);
- continuing to support visits by groups from the c. 70 different Higher Education Institutes who use the displays annually as part of their course, and receive an introduction to the Museum during their visit;
- continuing to support the 400+ individual scholars who visit annually to see items in the collections, both on and off display;
- continuing to produce exemplary publications (e.g. in spring 2015 two edited volumes drawing upon the Museum's photographic collections will be published).

6.5 *Leadership, sustainability and governance*

The Museum is committed to providing a wide range of support and advice to museums and galleries regionally, nationally and internationally; to sustainably enhancing and diversifying its

own philanthropic and other income streams; and to governing itself professionally. This will be achieved through:

- continuing to contribute to the full range of leadership activity as part of the Museum's ACE-funded MPM commitment (e.g. the Oxford Cultural Leaders programme will run annually from spring 2015, subject to continued ACE support);
- continuing to service the loan requests of other institutions on a cost-recovery basis (loan requests granted over the course of 2015 include those to British Library, British Museum, Manchester Museum, MUSEM (Marseilles), Oxfordshire Museum Service and Ashmolean Museum);
- continuing to respond to the c.2,000 enquiries which the Museum receives annually by email, phone and letter;
- enhancing commercial income through: enlarging the size of the Museum's stock and shop, expanding the offer with print-on-demand and licensing partners, increasing income through premises hire and from tours, and publishing an attractive book on the Museum (all ongoing);
- continuing to seek to raise project funding from a wide variety of academic, curatorial and philanthropic sources; with the assistance of support committed by the University's Development Office, launching an initiative to raise endowment funding (the latter from mid-2015);
- in conjunction with the University's Estates department, progressing the Museum's commitment to environmental sustainability through waste and carbon emission reduction (replace existing lighting throughout galleries and working areas with LED lighting by end 2016);
- continuing to ensure that the Museum is a well-managed institution, whose governance reflects an appropriate balance and representation of skills and experience from both within and beyond the University.

6.6 *Governing body succession planning*

Membership of the Visitors, the Museum's governing body, is prescribed by University regulation (see <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/528-122.shtml>). This requires Visitors' membership (other than for certain ex-officio positions) to rotate regularly. In appointing new members the Chair (appointed by the Vice-Chancellor) and the Visitors themselves, ensure that membership includes an appropriate balance and mix of senior skills and experience from both within and beyond the University. The current membership includes: a representative of the University's Council; the heads of the University's Social Sciences Division and the Schools of Anthropology and Archaeology; the Directors of Oxford's Ashmolean, Natural History and History of Science museums; the Chief Executive of the Horniman Museum; and the Keeper of the British Museum's department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. The Visitors meet termly.

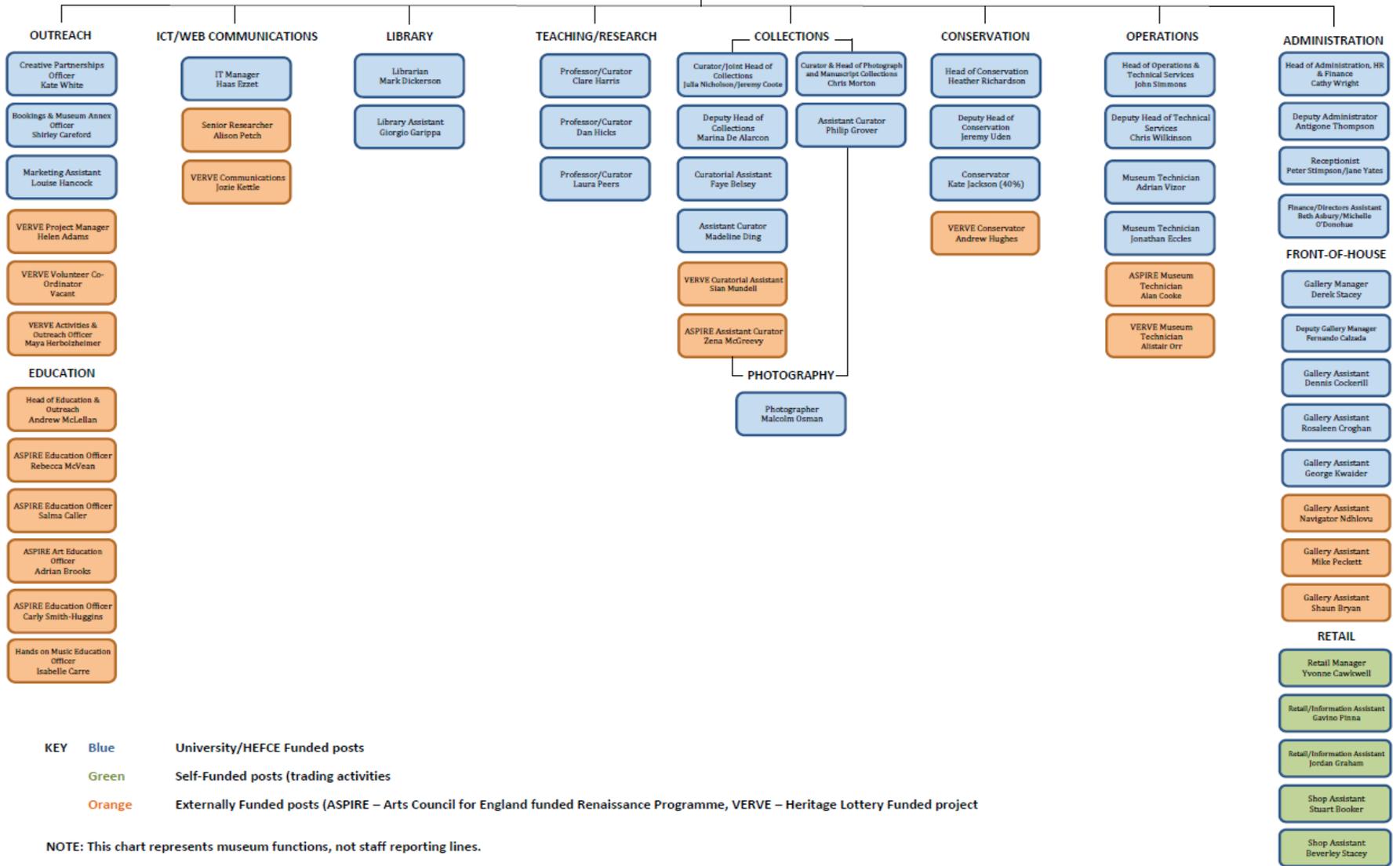
7 Resource plan

7.1 *Museum staffing structure*

See overleaf

PITT RIVERS MUSEUM STRUCTURE (March 2015)

FUNDRAISING ----- **DIRECTOR** ----- OUM PARTNERSHIP
 Director Mike O'Hanlon



7.2 Financial resources projection

		Notes	Budget 14/15 £'000	Plan 15/16 £'000	Plan 16/17 £'000	Plan 17/18 £'000	Plan 18/19 £'000
Expenditure							
Payroll	(Core)	a	-1229	-1189	-1173	-1185	-1185
Payroll	(Projects)	b	-228	-222	-226	-124	0
Payroll	(Sales and Services)	c	-67	-102	-102	-102	-102
Non Payroll	(Core)	d	-110	-172	-170	-154	-185
Non Payroll	(Projects)	e	-180	-201	-258	-187	-100
Non Payroll	(Sales and Services)	f	-60	-57	-60	-65	-62
Infrastructure and Capital		g	-497	-497	-497	-497	-497
Total Costs			-2371	-2440	-2486	-2314	-2131
Income							
HEFCE		h	725	725	725	725	725
University		i	909	954	954	954	954
Donations	(Core)	j	91	100	85	86	106
Donations	(Projects)	k	408	423	484	311	100
Sales		l	238	238	238	238	238
Total Income			2371	2440	2486	2314	2123
Assumptions							
No inflationary increase applied to 15/16 budget							
Non pay costs 2% increase							
Reduction of core staff costs from 15/16 following restructuring as senior staff retire							
University/HEFCE and Sales all remain level across the final three years							
Infrastructure and capital charges remain level for years 15/16 - 18/19							
NOTES							
a	Staff not working to a specific project but carrying out key museum roles						
b	Staff funded by specific short term projects (ie HLF funded VERVE)						
c	Staff funded by trading activities ie Museum Shop						
d	Purchases associated with the core activities of the Museum (ie conservation and collections management)						
e	Purchases specifically associated with each project						
f	Purchases associated with the purchase of stock for sale in the Museum Shop						
g	Infrastructure and capital charges levied by the University						
h	Income from Higher Education Funding Council for England						
i	University funding increase from 15/16 reflects an anticipated additional source of university income						
j	Donations including collections boxes						
k	Specific project funding (ie HLF funding for VERVE, DCMS/Wolfson Gallery Improvement Fund)						
l	Sales through through various trading activities including Museum Shop						