CASE STUDIES EXTRACT

ARCHIVES

Although these guidelines are intended for use in museums, galleries and children’s centres, the first of the case studies (Westminster City Archive) is from the archives domain. It illustrates materials that museums might use and shows an innovative approach to use of these items.

Archives often use a booking system to manage visitor attendances. For certain facilities, such as use of computers or consultation of microform records, an appointments system is used. For some archives, access is by appointment only. Some archive services have small exhibition or display areas and these may be part of a library or museum service to which they are attached, or with whom they share premises. A large part of the information most commonly accessed by members of the public is preserved on microfilm e.g. census returns and parish records etc.

In most local authority archives, users request documents using indexes and catalogues, and once they are given the documents, they are generally free to consult them without supervision, except for the general supervision of the searchroom. There is a more limited amount that archivists are able to do in the way of handling with schools and other groups. Of all the archives in the UK only seventeen have education officers, although many Record Offices have a member of staff with brief for education, even if this is not a full-time role. With the benefit of an education officer archives would be able to offer a more extensive service. Cross-domain working can also bring benefits. As an example, Warwickshire’s Department of Libraries and Heritage has a cross-domain education service (Heritage Education) that serves the education needs of libraries, archives and museums in the authority.

1. Westminster City Archives

Westminster City Archives has a dedicated Education Officer. Two hour sessions are offered to school classes primarily at KS2. The sessions offered relate at KS2 to the Tudors, Victorians, Britain since 1930 and local study; KS3 to the Industrial Revolution; and at ‘A’ level to looking at resources. A resource pack produced by the Archive, ‘Celebrating the Black Presence in Westminster 1500-2000’, relates activities to other areas of the National Curriculum in particular Citizenship and personal, social and health education.

A two hour session is offered to Westminster schools at KS2 at a cost of £25 a class (approximately £0.80 per head) and to schools outside Westminster for £35/40 per class. The session starts in the meeting room on the ground floor and a mixture of OHPs, photocopies and originals are used with the children. The children are given an introduction about the importance of careful handling, the preciousness of the objects, how natural acids on the hands can damage the documents and the longevity of paper. The usual rules in search rooms are explained to the children i.e. use only pencils not pens. This introduction serves to make the children realise how important and precious the objects are and installs a sense of awe. Some originals are presented to the children in ‘Secol’ (polyester) sleeves for protection.
For the second part of the session, the children are divided into groups and taken to the search, conservation and strong rooms, where the children can take the large volumes from the shelves and unwrap them. This allows the children to feel the sensation of the leather and parchment. Although all the necessary information can be obtained from photocopies, an important part of the session is introducing the children to the original materials, so a comparison can be made of, say, the weight and feel and smell of paper and parchment. The possibility of using white gloves was investigated, but it was impossible to obtain gloves small enough to fit the children’s hands.

Sessions are sometimes led by the Education Officer at the schools and original material, such as Victorian diaries, is used which can be rotated to minimise damage. Undoubtedly the diaries have suffered slightly as a result of the handling, but this is offset by the value of the session to the children.

Unusually for an archive (as Westminster has no local museum) two loan boxes are available for hire by schools. The subjects of the boxes are ‘Britain since the 1930s’ and ‘the Victorians’. In addition to original documents, the boxes are supplemented with objects bought at Antique Fairs.

Sessions are offered to other groups e.g. the London College of Fashion, legal surveyors and chartered surveyors, at a cost of £50 for a two hour session.

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MUSEUMS AND ART GALLERIES

2. The British Museum

For two months in 1983 the British Museum organised an exhibition ‘Please Touch’ which was designed for visually impaired people but was also open to sighted visitors.

Objects were selected on the basis of size and tactile interest. Twenty objects were approved by conservators and curators and consisted entirely of stones: marble, basalt, sandstone, jade, granite and porphyry. The pieces dated from the Egyptian Pre-dynastic period (before 3,200 BC to the 19th Century). No metal pieces were used because of the possible damage that could be caused by perspiration from the hands. The objects were examined by the conservators before the exhibition and daily inspections were made. One sandstone relief which had been consolidated lost some tiny fragments but not in the areas of carved detail. A very popular small jade duck’s beak was broken off and had to be withdrawn. It is likely that there was an undetectable pre-existing fracture which resulted in the breakage. However, it was possible to repair the break.

Each object was placed in the exhibition on a plinth. Smaller objects were fastened to the plinths with perspex clips. Hand sized objects were enclosed in boxes for security and safety. The boxes had solid sides and backs and were lined with rubber so they could be picked up. The top and back was made from 6mm perspex with two hand holes cut in the front so the visitor could feel and pick up the object. It was later discussed whether these boxes could have been made with all sides constructed from Perspex so the objects would be more visible. Also, it was suggested that all of the smaller objects could have been placed in one part of the gallery to facilitate surveillance.

The exhibition’s success relied on volunteers handing out tissues for wiping hands, ensuring rings and bracelets were removed and helping warders supervise the gallery.
Coles (1984) states that, for visually impaired visitors, the two relief pieces and larger objects were least popular, because of difficulty in comprehending them.

3. Canadian Children’s Museum, Quebec

The Canadian Children’s Museum is part of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation. The children’s museum aims to ‘enrich children’s lives, to broaden their cultural experience and to provide them with a creative space in which to learn about the world’. Hands-on activities are provided in conjunction with traditional displays.

The collections are registered into two separate categories: the permanent collection and the interpretative collection. The permanent collection consists of artefacts which are held in trust by the museum for the future. The interpretative collection is comprised of: objects which may be used without restriction in interactive hands-on applications such as replaceable contemporary objects, replicas, reproductions and duplicates. The prop collection includes objects to support specific exhibitions, which are not normally included in the permanent or hands-on collection.

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4. Chertsey Museum

At Chertsey Museum in Surrey there is an education assistant who manages 16 boxes which are offered on loan to schools. Objects are collected and returned by borrowers. Approximately 50 loans go out per year. The museum operates an outreach affiliation scheme for schools who are charged £25.75 per year. This fee gives reduced rates for talks, free loan boxes, free standard talks at the museum, a free termly newsletter and tailored teaching sessions.

In handling sessions fragile items are shown to the group. The rarity and fragility of the items is explained and cotton gloves are provided for handling for certain objects. Child size replica dresses have been commissioned for children to try on. Children are not allowed to try on gas marks which have asbestos filters and young children are not allowed to handle the lead toys. Over five years, only a few objects have sustained minor damage.

One gallery in the museum was designed specifically for hands-on use by schools and general visitors, without the need for museum staffing. The room was divided initially into three areas: Prehistory, Time and the Victorians. However, the Time area did not prove very successful and has been changed into an area on the Greeks, an area in which the museum has strong collections.

At the entrance to the gallery there is a reconstructed archaeological trench with recesses into which the objects are fixed. Flaps can be lifted to view the objects. Some of the objects are protected with a sheet of Perspex, whilst others (e.g. a Neolithic auroch’s horn, a piece of Roman Samian ware, a tile, and WWII armour-piercing shell) can be touched.

There is a Victorian cooking range with objects such as a kettle and iron that can be touched. Next to the range is a mangle (the only one in the museum’s collection), which has been adapted for use with a perspex shield to prevent children trapping their fingers. Reproduction toys such as a zoetrope can be handled, whilst the originals are on display within a replica musical toy chest protected by perspex.
The gallery was designed with the emphasis on handling original objects, so that activities were inclusive, rather than using computer terminals, which would only be accessible to a few people at any one time.

In the Chertsey Abbey Gallery accurate reproductions of floor tiles from the abbey were made by a local potter. The tiles are set in a frame and can be arranged in patterns. The originals are on display in an adjacent case. Since 1996, when the display was created, none of the tiles have been stolen, but they have become slightly chipped.

The museum has on average 3,000 individual school pupil visits per year.

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5. Down County Museum, Downpatrick, Northern Ireland

At Down Community Museum, the majority of objects used for handling are duplicates, although items are purchased at shops and auctions and reproduction costume is available for children to try on. For the Viking sessions, which are very popular, reproductions are used due to the scarcity of the material.

7-8,000 school sessions are held per year and 20-30 sessions for other groups. Schools are charged £2 per head for sessions led by the staff at the museum, although general visits are free and no charge is made for sessions for other groups. The museum has a collection of handling boxes for pupils in the primary sector but these are mainly for use on the museum site to encourage children to explore the museum. Only a small number of objects have been damaged including spectacles, a jewellery box and a small lace iron.

A Victorian exhibition is being organised to open in February 2001 which will include a play room with a mixture of originals, replicas and duplicates. The objects will not be secured, but there will be attendant staff in the gallery.

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6. The Education Museum, Wynberg, South Africa

The Education Museum in Wynberg, South Africa is part of the Centre for Conservation and Education and falls under the Western Cape Education Department. Sessions are taught around three main topics: the conservation of the natural, the manmade and the social environment. The Museum is situated in an old school building and has a vast collection of artefacts reflecting the history of education in the Western Cape. Among the displays is a comparative display ‘The Old and the New’, where, for example, a modern ballpoint pen is placed alongside an original dip-pen. The articles in this particular display are part of the Museum’s handling collection and schoolchildren are encouraged to touch these articles during the session. Articles in the Museum’s handling collections are original artefacts of which the Museum has duplicates. Because the Education Museum falls under the local education authority, it is automatically offered first choice of any historic objects or furniture when schools close. Other objects are donated by local schools or private individuals.

Much of the Centre’s teaching occurs in the Museum, including a popular social environment session ‘When Great-Grandmother was at School’. This lesson is held in a reconstructed Victorian schoolroom using original
slates and slate pens, ink and dip-pens and reproduction copy books. There is the opportunity for children to dress in reproduction costumes and they get the chance to play games using Victorian toys such as marbles. Cocoa is sometimes served in original tin mugs and biscuits in an original biscuit tin. Another lesson called ‘Adventure in Archaeology’ involves children digging up genuine but planted African Stone Age tools. Once a year, a multi-disciplinary educational exhibition is arranged around International Museum Day. Many hands-on activities are devised for learners around a specific theme (e.g. 1997: ‘Illegal Trade’) and these activities are run by staff and volunteers. The presentations of the Educational Museum are available to schoolchildren from Grades 4 to 12 (i.e. ages 9-18 years). About 500 sessions are held each year, involving some 20,000 children and teachers. Of these sessions, about 200 are held in the Museum.

Only one slate has been broken in the twelve years of the Museum’s existence and a total of six artefacts have been damaged, more from natural wear and tear than anything else.

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7. The Egypt Centre at the University of Wales, Swansea

In the Egypt Centre, there are two galleries with hands-on activities in each. In the ‘House of Life’ the children closely examine the different materials used by the ancient Egyptians and handle objects made of pottery, stone, faience, glass, wood, metal and papyrus. Children can dress up as ancient Egyptians in reproduction clothes and handle original objects (gloves are provided for the children to wear). They enjoy the Egyptian hieroglyph writing activity with replica stelae to handle. Children can play senet on a replica board and view the original object in case. A popular activity is the Egyptian maths and measuring activity. Children and teachers have commented that, by actively using a different measuring and calculating system, children who do not normally enjoy maths really develop their mathematical skills, through play, without realising it. In the ‘House of Death’ children can mummify a reproduction body using reproduction amulets and closely examine shabti figures. Robust objects, and those with an unknown provenance, are chosen. Reproductions are used for valuable categories of objects and for those which could be dangerous (such as mummified remains). Children handle replica animal and god figures and then guess what the ‘animals in the bag are’ through touch only. They also make clay offering trays after closely looking and learning about real ones in the gallery.

A charge of £1 per head is made. Photographs are taken of the objects before they are handled and no damage has occurred in two years.

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8. Goole Community Museum

At Goole Community Museum boxes of handling material are loaned to schools at no charge. The loan boxes service has only recently been established and is being developed. At the moment boxes can be carried to a museum convenient to the borrower but, as the service expands, the schools library service will be used.
Victorian washing and baking days are organised using original objects and original costume is available for handling under supervision. Reproductions are used in other workshops (e.g. Anglo-Saxon and Roman days) and loan boxes when items, such as Tudor cutlery, are regarded as too valuable. Risk assessments are undertaken on all objects and some machinery on display is immobilised. In 18 months two objects have been damaged: the handle of a vacuum cleaner and a glass spatula.

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9. **Grange Museum of Community History, Brent, London**

The Grange Museum has a dedicated education and lifelong learning officer and loan boxes are lent out to schools, day centres and nursing homes at a cost of £15 per week. Borrowers are responsible for collecting and returning objects. On average 20 loans go out per year.

Up to 200 supervised handling sessions per year are led by a member of staff. When original clothing is handled children are asked to clean their hands before the session. In the case of delicate items such as costume and toys these are shown to the children and then replicas are given to the children to handle and try on. Over 15 years, a china basin and cast iron utensil have been broken. On display, a telephone cord and jukebox, specifically purchased for hands-on use, were both damaged.

A charge of 50p per child is made for handling sessions led by the education and lifelong learning officer; when these involve using replica costume and the charge cost covers cleaning costs.

In the exhibition galleries original objects are chosen for their relevance to the National Curriculum, and are robust items such as a dolly and tub, range, washing machines, chairs, and tables. The objects are not necessarily duplicates. However a 1930s radio and telephone exchange are partially covered with Perspex to protect them.

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10. **Hampshire County Council Museum Service (HCCMS)**

**SEARCH**

SEARCH is Hampshire County Council Museum Service’s hands-on education centre for learning by discovery, which is situated in Gosport. Schools must pre-book and are charged £65 per group for sessions, which are led by museum staff. Activities are also organised during school holidays for family groups.

In SEARCH for Science, children handle and investigate real museum specimens such as birds, mammals, reptiles and insects. The museum has science equipment including video microscopes for viewing the collections. The sessions are linked to the science curriculum, targeted for KS1 and KS2.

SEARCH for History has hands-on sessions linked to specific units from the history curriculum. The upper floor is divided into four areas. In ‘Archaeology for Action’, children study excavated objects. In the Victorian room settings, original objects can be handled and reproduction Victorian costume can be tried on. The other areas are a
1930s room and ‘When Granny Was a Girl’, both with original objects and costume to try on. Apart from reproduction costume, some replica archaeological material is used (and some models are used for amphibians which do not stuff successfully). The children are encouraged to think of rules themselves for handling the objects during an introductory session. Children are asked to wash their hands before and after the session.

Objects which might pose a health & safety risk are not used, such as pewter, asbestos and objects with sharp blades. Stuffed animals are flame tested for arsenic (a method commonly used in the 19th century for preserving specimens).

Objects are examined before and after sessions and any damages are recorded on a sheet. Damage tends to occur occasionally to stuffed animal specimens and objects such as cups, old packaging etc (a glass knitting needle has been smashed and a cup broke along an existing crack line). On average, three or four objects are damaged each year. But only around ten items have been completely written off in five years. On average, up to 270 sessions are organised for school groups each year plus about 32 family sessions.

Coins are mounted in Perspex boxes; as well as preventing damage this also minimises the likelihood of the coins being dropped and lost.

The HCCMS conservators can repair broken objects. Fragile or potentially dangerous objects are handled in sealed boxes or are embedded.

The education staff at SEARCH have a very good relationship with the keepers. The collections management plan for HCCMS specifically mentions SEARCH, when considering acquiring objects for the collections. Items are loaned from the main collections, if requested, for a specific activity. The Head of Museum Education or the History Education Officer are included on the Hampshire History and Archaeology Collections Group and the Natural Science Officer is included in the Natural Sciences Collections Group.

HCCMS have organised hands-on exhibitions on the themes of Bones, ‘Discover This’ and ‘Shoes’, which tour around the county.

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Milestones
Milestones is Hampshire’s living history museum at Basingstoke with hands-on activities. It opened in November 2000, housing a series of street scenes showing a range of artefacts in Victorian and 1930s settings. The displays consist of a mixture of real and replica objects, which visitors can handle. Two activities have been developed for infants - Toys and Discovery. These are structured 1-hour sessions, which encourage the children to get involved in hands-on activities. At junior level, the activities include Victorian Britain and Britain since 1930.

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11. Hertford Museum
In 1998 Hertford Museum launched a pack and handling collection on ‘Housework in Victorian Times’ for KS1/2 pupils. The pack was produced with professional assistance from the South East Museums Education Unit and its production was partly funded by the Robert Kiln Charitable trust. On its initial launch 1,827 school children visited in 1998/9, in comparison with 864 for 1997/8. Teachers lead the sessions at the museum or the schools can employ a freelance teacher who is familiar with the objects if they prefer to have a session led for them.

Unfortunately since then the visitor numbers have declined, from 16,184 in 1998/9 to 13,876 in 1999/00 and the number of school children have dropped to 494 in 1999/00. There are many factors, which have contributed to the decline in visitor numbers, including the withdrawal of Hertfordshire County Council’s grant to the museum and the retirement of a member of staff whom it has not been possible to replace. The reduction in funding and staffing has meant that it has not been possible to do the marketing and other necessary procedures to sustain the project.

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12. The Museum of London

In 2000, the Museum of London ran a pilot scheme of providing a mini museum of Roman material to 200 primary schools; the full scheme aims to place a mini museum in every London primary and special school. The mini museums include a mixture of real artefacts and replica and support material. The project was evaluated using an in-depth questionnaire completed by 78% of teachers using the box. Teachers were very enthusiastic about the boxes – 92% saying that it had improved their pupils’ understanding of the Roman period and 67% saying that it had benefited pupils with special needs. Over half the teachers said they would use boxes in non-history lessons such as science, art, English, geography and design and technology.

As well as the questionnaire distributed to teachers for evaluation, 29 schools were visited whilst they were using the boxes. This observation showed that teachers and pupils gained considerable understanding from using the objects. The pilot project showed the importance of maintaining frequent contact with schools as it was found difficult to motivate all teachers to come to the training courses, although attendance was one of the conditions of taking a loan box. Training was recognised as essential to ensure the boxes were successful and permanently valued by schools. Teachers rated the training courses highly with the majority feeling more confident about using objects with the children after the course.

In 2000, the Museum of London organised an exhibition, called ‘High St Londinium’, of a reconstructed Roman street, which included shops with reproduction artefacts that could be handled. It was felt that using only reproductions for the exhibition would provide consistency, illustrating how the objects would appear in contemporary use (excavated and conserved artefacts would look very different). The original objects from the excavation were displayed in glass cases at the end of the exhibition.

Some of the reproductions were fixed down and others were tethered using nylon cord. It was found that fixing the objects often resulted in greater damage than if they had not been secured as visitors attempted to pick them up.

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e-mail: acalver@museumoflondon.org.uk
13. The National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside

Liverpool Museum
The National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside covers several sites including the Liverpool Museum, which contains specimens covering both the humanities and sciences. Liverpool Museum was one of the first museums in the country to develop an area dedicated to hands-on access to the collections, the Natural History Centre, which opened in 1988. The museum is currently undergoing a £26 million refurbishment, with HLF funding, to redevelop and expand the Natural History Centre and create the Discovery Centre, a complementary facility to promote access to the humanities collection.

The Discovery Centre will make the humanities collections (archaeology, antiquities and ethnography) available for handling for all visitors, including school pupils and visually impaired people, in a dedicated space created for this purpose. Replica and reproductions will only be used under specific circumstances and the museum is committed to using real objects for handling wherever possible. Both the expanded Natural History Centre and the Discovery Centre will be staffed by trained demonstrators whose job is to encourage interaction between visitors and objects. Visitors will also have access to resources such as video microscopes, book, CD-roms and the Internet. Both centres are now due to open towards the end of 2002.

Over the past ten years, only a few objects have been damaged or lost. A piece of South American pottery was dropped and broken by a visitor and some sherds of Roman pottery have gone missing.

Objects are sometimes mounted in Perspex containers so that they can be looked at closely but not actually touched.

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Conservation Centre
At the Conservation Centre, which is part of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, handling sessions are led by school teachers who are briefed by staff, though sessions can be arranged for other groups. The sessions are designed to bring out conservation issues and introduce ideas of care and treatment, which are linked to the long-term exhibition ‘Caught in Time’. Objects are chosen to show damage and wear, or to show how a fragile object can become damaged.

Objects are monitored visually for any damaged items which have become dangerous, but any wear and tear enhances the objects’ demonstration of conservation issues. The objects are a mixture of de-accessioned items and objects specifically purchased. Conservators were instrumental in setting up the session.

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14. Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
‘Sensations’, an exhibition of artefacts on open display on the theme of water, opened at the Castle Museum in Norwich in July 1997. After five months at the museum, half the exhibition toured to Thetford and King’s Lynn museums. The exhibition was targeted at disabled people, but also was designed to attract schools and family groups. The exhibition was designed in-house, led by the head of the museum education department with staff from display, conservation, front of house and people with visual impairments.

Objects were selected from the social history, art and natural history collections including: an iron lion’s head fountain plate; an early 19th century leather and brass hose; a leather bucket; ceramics; and animals which had been specially stuffed for the exhibition. All the objects could be handled, although some were tethered with cords. Objects were chosen on the basis of their tactile qualities and robustness for handling, and some of the objects were unique to the collection. Over the period of the exhibition no objects were stolen and nothing was broken. Throughout the exhibition there was always a minimum of one member of staff on duty in the area.

After ‘Sensations’ opened at the Castle Museum, funding was obtained to produce a small travelling display which went to six venues – a library, two community centres, and three supermarkets. The six objects selected were similar to, or the same as those from the main exhibition: a stuffed rat, an ocean drum, a pot of sculptured perfumed daisies, a contemporary tea pot, a stirrup pump and a piece of Anglo-Saxon wood (Siliprandi, 1999).

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15. North-East London Museums Group (NELMG)

The museums in the group are a mixture of small local authority and independent museums, the majority of which have no dedicated education staff. It was decided to assemble boxes of original and reproduction materials, which could rotate between participating museums and be used by staff for handling sessions with schools and other community groups. An education sub-committee was set up and each museum was asked to contribute original objects on the two themes of the Victorians and Taking Tea. A grant was obtained from the London Borough Grants committee, which enabled the group to commission four reproduction Victorian costumes, and sturdy aluminium suitcases filled with Plaztazote for safe storage and transport of the objects. The museums in the group all have different strengths in their collection and also benefit from the Museum of London being part of the group, which was able to donate some unaccessioned items of original costume that complimented the commissioned reproduction costumes. By working as a group the museums were able to collect together a selection of items that would not otherwise have been possible, could draw on group members’ varying expertise and could apply for grants as a group.

Contact: Pat Elliott, Loans box co-ordinator for NELMG, 7 Guildford Road, Ilford, Essex IG3 9YB
Telephone: 020 8597 6861

Hackney Museum

Hackney Museum is part of NELMG and at present has no site as a new museum building is being constructed. The new museum is due to open to the public in April 2002. Supervised sessions are led by an education officer at schools and other sites in the borough. Approximately 140 sessions are held per year. The objects are checked at the end of each session. There are approximately 500 objects in the collection. These items cover a wide range of materials including potentially vulnerable objects such as fabrics and Victorian oil lamps with glass. Some of the items were de-accessioned from the museum’s main collections whilst others (such as costume) have been specifically bought for handling. Since the sessions began in 1998 there has been no obvious damage to the objects.
An assessment is made of each object to identify whether it is suitable for the target age group from an educational and health and safety viewpoint. A glass photograph is sealed in a transparent container as it was regarded as vulnerable and potentially harmful if broken. Reproductions are only used when original material is not available, for instance for a session on Beowulf and the Anglo-Saxons. No charge is made for the service.

**Contact:** Claire Adler, Community Education Officer, Hackney Museum, Parkside Library, Victoria Park Road, Hackney E9 7JL  
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**e-mail:** cadler@hackney.gov.uk

**Islington Museum**

Islington Museum, also part of NELMG, has only one member of staff (the museum manager) and therefore the provision of educational sessions is limited. However, using the NELMG boxes (see above) the museum manager was able to offer handling sessions to schools which were either led by the manager, volunteers or a freelance education officer who was funded from the charge of £2 per child. These sessions proved immensely popular and the museum substantially increased the number of school groups visiting the museum.

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16. **The Open Museum, Glasgow**

The Open Museum offers handling collections and exhibitions to community groups in Glasgow Museums’ catchment area. It has been established since 1991. 1,000 kits go out per year. No charge is made for the service and borrowers usually collect and return the objects themselves unless they are very large. Audio visual material is also included with the objects in the boxes. The Open Museum Collections management policy has a system of grading community venues at which the loans are displayed, as follows:-

‘Venues will be assessed and graded according to the table below. Grade “A” venues will be suitable for community displays of most categories of object as well as suitable users of unsupervised object handling kits. Grade “B” venues will generally be suitable for cased displays of less sensitive objects only. Grade “C” venues will be suitable for displays only of the most robust and easily replaceable objects unless extraordinary steps are taken to improve their security and environment’.

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>A</th>
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<th>C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure storage available</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Supervision of display areas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Staff Supervision of venue</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very little historic evidence of theft or vandalism</td>
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<td>Easily adjustable light levels</td>
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<td>On-site 24hour security/regular patrols</td>
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<td>Secure perimeter</td>
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<td>Capacity for local environmental control</td>
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<td>Intruder Alarm</td>
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‘A single contact at each venue will be established with responsibility for liaising with the Open Museum. The contact will be responsible for keeping to the loan conditions specified for each display and for informing the Open
Museum in the event of any theft or damage to objects. Open Museum staff will undertake regular venue inspections’ (Edwards, 1999).

The policy also states that blades, weapons and replica weapons will not be used in community displays.

Over ten years, 20 objects have been damaged: natural history specimens, a rubber object and ceramics.

Contact: Laura McGugan, Curator, The Open Museum, Martyrs School, Parson Street, Glasgow G4 0PX
Telephone: 0141 552 2356
e-mail: laura.mcgugan@cls.glasgow.gov.uk

17. Pembroke Museum Service

Scolton Visitor Centre opened a new gallery in April 1999, ‘Beyond the Green Baize Door: the Victorian servant’, in which visitors can try some of the servants’ daily tasks.

The museum also holds an annual video game week. The museum gallery is filled with video games, consoles and memorabilia from the 1970s, right up to the present day and visitors have the opportunity to play video games on over 20 systems. The exhibition brings in an audience who do not normally visit museums and leads to families interacting together with the displays. The exhibition raises interesting points with regard to collections management and contemporary collecting policies, as the visitors were encouraged to really use the exhibits. The curator argues that the consoles are not the real artefacts, but rather the lines of programming code.

Contact: Mark Thomas, County Museums Officer or Nick Suffolk, Museums Officer Pembroke Museum Service, The County Library, Dew Street, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, Wales
Telephone: 01437 779500

18. The Please Touch Museum, Philadelphia

The Please Touch Museum has been open for 20 years and caters for children aged one to seven, creating an environment where adults and children can learn and explore together.

The museum has travelling trunks (museum exhibits in a box), which contain original games, costumes and artefacts which are loaned out to groups. Trunk themes include: art around the world, with authentic artworks from the Americas, Asia, Africa and Ancient Egypt; ‘Franklin’s Philadelphia’ which introduces the concept of childhood in the 1700s with examples of colonial dress, toys, house models and games; and ‘Growing up around the world’ which gives the opportunity to explore authentic artefacts, festival costumes, musical instruments, family life and geography. The trunks can be rented for $50 dollars a week and staff can deliver programmes at the venue for $300 dollars for a two hour session.

The museum has a collection of over 9,000 toys, rocks, musical instruments and multicultural artefacts. There are a series of interactive galleries: ‘Move it’ teaches children about various forms of transportation; ‘Sendek’ is part of a collaboration with the Rosenbach Museum and Library, displaying a collection of original artworks and collection of rare books; ‘Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland’ allows visitors to explore the rabbit hole and then choose to enter the Hall of doors and mirrors, a game of croquet or the Mad Hatter’s tea party. The exhibition includes collection of several hundred artefacts including tea sets, holiday ornaments, figurines, puppets and a clock.
Individual visits to the museum are charged at $8.95. A charge is made for pre-booked group visits of $5.00 per person for a 75 minute gallery visit which includes a visit to the museums outdoor learning centre, the Science Park, and $6.95 for an unlimited gallery visit.

All objects, whether in the permanent or educational collections, are assigned into one of three categories: Red (non-handling), Yellow (supervised handling) and Green (unsupervised handling). Criteria for care, loans and documentation vary for each category.

‘The Red (non-handling) category contains objects being preserved and protected for future generations. The artefacts are the finest examples in the collection with good provenance or documentation and may be one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable, rare or fragile. These objects are formally accessioned, may be handled only by trained staff and are subject to standard museum care practices, including restrictions on use, loan and exhibit.

The Yellow (supervised handling) category contained objects which may be carefully touched under strict staff supervision. The objects consist of objects with weaker provenance than those in the red category but may be near duplicates of red category objects; they are objects that can easily withstand careful handling. These objects are formally accessioned and may be handled by visitors under supervision and at the discretion of the staff member responsible for the program in which the object is being used.
The Green (hands-on) category contains objects without provenance, replaceable contemporary objects, durable objects, reproductions or one of a quantity of duplicates. The objects are formally accessioned primarily to permit inventory control and accountability. These objects may be handled by visitors. Some, especially reproductions and duplicates, are considered expendable in the long term and are part of the educational collection. Their storage is planned for the convenience of the program staff rather than for long-term preservation. However, some objects in the hands-on category, such as large metal sculptures, are part of the permanent collection and are documented accordingly; their handling status may be changed to yellow or red if and when circumstances warrant’ (Rowley, 2000).

However, this system although simple and elegant, does require intense staffing to supervise. More recently, collections have been organised along the lines of educational and core collections.

For the Contemporary Toy Collection, two of each item are acquired, one for the permanent collection in the red category, the other for the educational collection in the green category for potential hands-on use.

Children are given an introduction about rudimentary handling techniques and repeat visitors are eager to tell newcomers about the procedures. Objects which are selected for the hands-on programme are considered to be expendable to a certain extent and long term preservation takes second place to educational value.

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19. Reading Museum Service

Reading Museum has had a loan service for 90 years. There are a total of 2,000 collections or boxes, which are loaned out to schools with 1 to 30 items in each box, a total of 20,000 objects. The objects cover a wide range from an Egyptian mummified cat to an art collection of original prints. There are no replicas in the boxes, but there are models of machines such as traction engines. Several thousand objects are loaned out each year. Groups are charged £20 per collection and the objects are delivered and collected from the borrowers.
Some of the most vulnerable objects, such as the mummified cat, are mounted in a Perspex cylinder so that they can be closely observed, but not actually touched. The collection is gradually being transferred to new aluminium suitcases that are filled with Plastazote, which has holes cut into which the objects fit.

As a result of feedback from teachers, panels with interpretative information have been designed which can be displayed with the objects.

The museum also runs a corporate loan scheme. Businesses can borrow objects, which are purpose mounted in a showcase on a plinth, and it is intended that this scheme will be extended for teachers. The Box Room gallery at Reading museum is divided into three areas. The first is the racking with the loan boxes and the second is where the staff prepare the boxes, both of which are on show to the public behind glass and a low barrier. The third area is the interactive gallery itself, which opened in 1997, with objects, which can be picked up and handled by the children. Computer terminals, where further information can be accessed about the collections, support this. Objects range from a fragment of a Roman Samian bowl to a 17th century Bellamine jug, Victorian glass bottle and 20th Century shoes. Since the gallery has been open, only one object has been damaged: a driving licence, which was covered in graffiti and which it was subsequently decided to withdraw. Some of the objects have niches in which they are replaced after use, whilst others sit on a surface in front of showcases displaying other objects. There is always a member of staff on hand to help with visitors and invigilate the displays. So far no objects have been stolen from the gallery apart from a modern plastic model of a rhinoceros designed to illustrate the animal whose skull is on display.

There is a strong emphasis on the use of original objects rather than replicas and this is a change in philosophy from the first galleries that were refurbished such as the Silchester galley of Roman life. In this gallery for instance, oversize replica Roman coins can be rubbed to produce a drawing. But it was felt that their size was misleading. The only instance now in which reproductions are used is with costume.

A total of seven new galleries were opened in March 2000 including the Reading: People and Place gallery. This has on open display a wooden timber (treated with wax) dating to 1400 from Reading Abbey; it is secured against the wall in a bracket with Plastazote padding. There is also an early 20th century printing block and 19th century carved wooden sheep’s head, which are fixed to a table at which you can sit and closely observe and feel the objects. Seats from the local football stadium, which were intended to be handled, were secured in the horizontal position because of worries over the seats collapsing through use.

In the Window gallery there is a display of sculpture and ceramics on open display, ranging from a mid 20th Century steatite torso to a 17th Century Delftware charger and objects from Reading Abbey, such as a 13th/14th century knight’s head and springer dating to 1125, both made from Caen stone. All of the objects are on open display, but some have a Perspex sheet mounted a few centimetres in front of the objects to minimise damage. So far only one object has been damaged, an architectural element from the abbey which was drawn on with crayon, despite being behind the Perspex sheet. There is a presumption that all the objects on open display can be touched, although there is no signage to indicate this and it is intended, in the future, that all objects which can be handled should be marked as such.

In the Green gallery, examples of the local rock types are secured in cages made from Perspex rods so that the objects can be touched, but cannot be picked up and used as missiles.

In the Art Galley, there is a changing display of paintings and works of art on paper. If the paintings are unglazed they are left like this, so that the detail and texture of the paintings can be observed. Only one object, a miniature, has been protected with a Perspex sheet.
On Thursdays, from 2-7, the museum holds surgeries during which members of the public can view the works of art on paper, which are stored in drawers in the gallery. On this afternoon, objects can also be brought in for identification. On Mondays visitors can come to the stores to view the objects. **Contact:** Joy McAlpine, DfEE Project coordinator, Javier Pes, Exhibition Manager or Margaret Hatt, Education Officer, Reading Museum Service, Blagrave St, Reading, Berks **Telephone:** 0118 939 9800 **e-mail:** joy.mcalpine@reading.gov.uk

20. **Southampton Historic Sites Unit**

Southampton has three museum sites: Tudor House Museum, the Museum of Archaeology and the Maritime Museum. Workshops including handling sessions are organised at all three sites and at schools at a cost of £2 per child for Southampton schools and £3.00 for non-Southampton schools. One hour sessions at schools are charged from £1.50 per child.

All museums have hands-on activities for children using original objects. At the archaeology museum rim sherds of Roman pottery can be sorted by fabric and colour. Visitors are invited to make their own mosaic based on an original Roman artefact (in a sand tray) and try on reproduction Roman dress. Also tours are organised, including for visually impaired people, to the stores, so visitors can handle finds.

At Tudor House Museum a selection of six Victorian household objects are mounted in recesses in a wooden board, which are specially cut to shape to accommodate the objects. Visitors can lift and handle the objects, which range from a ceramic hot water bottle to a metal pan. Another area has a selection of objects associated with lighting: a metal brazier and rush light holder.

The Historic Sites Unit has developed two new Discovery Boxes for schools’ use or special events. The first is a trunk with objects for handling and structured activities, for use in the Victorian House and Home Exhibition at Tudor House. The second is for use in the Titanic Voices Gallery at the Maritime Museum. The *Titanic Discovery Box* has been devised specifically for use by infant schools or informal family learning opportunities in the museum context, and includes multimedia resources based in the city’s Oral History Archive. The same box is available for hire for use in the classroom.

There is a range of loan boxes with items selected from the city’s collections, for hire to schools and community groups at £10.00 per week. Each box contains about twelve objects for handling, with accompanying notes for teachers. Themes are wide ranging and include *Victorian People, Laundry and Saxons*. There are five new Medieval Life themed cases with structured activities for schools using primary artefacts. These range from *Introducing Archaeology* to *People, Clothes and Accessories*. They contain fewer objects securely presented in crystal boxes set in plastizote. The presentation of the cases has been chosen to help meet the needs of the MGEP(DfES) *Medieval Southampton Education Resources Project* for the Historic Sites’ Secondary schools audience, and has been directly influenced by the work of Reading Museum Service (see case study 19).

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21. **The Tate, London**
The Tate organised a touch exhibition of modern sculpture on the theme of the human body in 1976, which contained items from the Tate’s collection as well as specially commissioned pieces and a set of tools loaned by Henry Moore. To minimise the damage to objects, washing facilities were improvised at the entrance to the exhibition and visitors were asked to remove rings and other jewellery. When the gallery became too crowded (about 30 to 40 people) it was temporarily closed to all but visually impaired people. 2,000 visually impaired visitors came to the exhibition, which was also open to sighted visitors.

Another tactile exhibition of modern sculpture was held in 1981, but was restricted to visually impaired people. Gauze bandages were provided to slip over fingers where rings could or would not be removed. For this later exhibition two small sculptures, which could be held in the hand, rested on a cushion base, with the remainder being on bases, or directly on the floor. The smaller naturalistic pieces were the most popular, as well as those which had sensuous curves and hollows. 1700 visually impaired people visited the exhibition over nine weeks.

At Tate Modern, handling sessions are led by museum staff for children from KS1 - KS4, as well as for community groups and visually impaired people. Activities focus on interpretative tools for the artworks on display. For instance, Picasso’s Weeping Women is investigated and shards of perspex are handled to express the emotion in the picture, and examples of materials and paint surfaces are handled. On average six sessions are held per day.

Special tours are organised for visually impaired visitors and conservators are consulted over which objects are suitable. Gloves are provided for visitors when handling sensitive objects.

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22. Ulster Museum, Belfast

The Ulster Museum has a Discovery Bus that has been visiting primary schools, special schools and community events in greater Belfast area since 1990. Its main purpose is to take handling collections and other educational resources into the wider community to support science in the National Curriculum. The teaching resources include geological specimens, stuffed mammals etc.

14,000 - 16,000 people visit the Science Discovery Bus each year. The majority of the items are specially bought for the bus. 20-25 schools are visited every year. Each child at the school has an opportunity to visit the bus and handle and discover about the objects on display. To further supplement this service there are six bus collections based ‘loan boxes’, which can be used to extend the experience in a classroom situation by the schoolteachers for the duration of the bus visit (average bus visit about four to five days). The objects on the science bus are positioned on explanation plates so it is obvious if one goes missing. There is a system of labelling which identifies the degree of handling which can be used with an object: a silhouetted hand for geological specimens means they can be picked up; a pointing finger for stuffed animals means they can be touched, and a hand with an X is used for stuffed birds, which are particularly vulnerable and should not be touched at all. Over a ten year period, five items have been damaged and one scorpion has been stolen. The Science Discovery Bus school visits are free of charge as are the majority of workshops held on the museum site. The lessons taking place in the museum all focus on handling real objects. Original stone tools are handled in the Early Times lesson, a Ushabati figure in the Egyptian lesson and an original cannonball in the Armada lesson. Original costume is used for handling sessions on the Victorians and the Home Front at the museum and reproductions are used, for the popular Viking sessions, because of the rarity of the material. In the in-house science lessons a very wide range of geological and zoological material can be handled from dinosaur eggs to stuffed badgers and bats.
The Early Ireland Gallery which has been opened approximately five years has a tableau of Stone Age material and children can handle the different types of fur and identify the animals in the tableau. There is also a Bronze Age flat axe and polished stone age tools for children to handle. Sherds of different types of pottery can be handled and identified with the objects in the case. Over a 20 year period in the museum three objects have been damaged: a pottery sherd, a flint arrowhead and axe.

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Telephone: 028 9038 3032

23. Victoria and Albert Museum

At the time of writing, the V&A is currently developing the £31 million HLF funded British Galleries Project with the theme of 400 years of art and design and is due to open in November 2001. Hands-on exhibits are currently being developed around each theme. There will be about 18 handling stations with up to twelve items per station and a further 100 interpretative devices, including a mixture of models, replica and original objects. For instance an original chair will be mounted but will not be touchable, although an accurate reproduction has been commissioned which visitors will be able to reassemble. Original objects include sherds of ceramics, carved woodwork, metals and glass. Some items have been specifically bought for the project whilst others have been drawn from the museum’s permanent collections. Commercial tethers (used for computers) will secure original objects so that they can be picked up and closely examined. There will be a clear demarcation between which objects can or cannot be touched. The gallery has a proposed 25 year life and it is anticipated that an extra ¼ million visitors will come specifically to the gallery. At present the V&A has approximately 1 million visitors per year. To avoid the frustrating problem of areas being out of order, the units will be designed so that they can be completely removed for repair. The intention is that the hands-on areas will be an integral part of the displays although activities like the chair re-assembly will be separated so that they do not present a hazard.

In the V&A’s Chinese and Korean Galleries there are objects on display which can be handled by visitors. The Chinese Gallery contains a Serpentine Carving of a head dated to the Ming period (1600) and a ceramic Ming vase of 1500. Visitors are requested to remove rings from their fingers whilst handling the objects. The Korean Gallery has a ceramic vase from about 1800. All are reasonably substantial objects, which are fixed to the plinths on which they sit.

In the Silver Gallery a series of silver tablespoons from the 1700s to the present day have been tethered to enable visitors to pick the spoons up and look at them closely and there is also an area where two silver objects (a decorated silver tankard 1714-1715 and a silver plated cake basket of 1785) are displayed in a cage so that visitors can pick the objects up but can not remove them from the cage.

In the 20th Century Gallery two contemporary wooden drawers and three ceramic jugs are tethered and displayed on plastazote to allow visitors to lift and explore the objects thoroughly. The objects were purchased for handling.

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24. Walsall Museum & Library
Walsall Museum offers history workshops at KS1 and KS2 using original Victorian material and replica costume which can be tried on. The museum has a permanent interactive discovery area in which children can handle original objects. Wall mounted boxes with perspex fronts have holes so that objects can be touched. Other objects are secured to shelves so that they can be handled. Objects include a variety of metal and plastic kettles from the Victorian period to the present day and a ceramic bed warmer.

The museum has arranged a number of temporary exhibitions with hands-on elements. ‘Start’, on the topic of art, was targeted at three to five year olds. ‘Me and You’ was aimed at pre-school children and explored themes using objects from the Museum & Art Gallery’s social history and art collections. Concern over the rate at which the protective coating was worn away on a number of bronzes led to the use of perspex cases.

There are plans to develop the Walsall Museum & Library ‘Vision’ which began in August 2001 with the installation of a lift and redevelopment work to the ground floor. Phase II contains plans to create a more interactive Costume gallery and the ‘Amongst the Books’ project which aims to display objects on the library bookshelves, making links to printed material creating an element of surprise and encouraging visits to the Museum.

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**e-mail:** franklin@wm-museums.co.uk

### 25. Woodhorn Colliery Museum, Northumberland

At Woodhorn Colliery Museum objects selected for loan boxes are usually duplicates or incomplete. The mining box contains examples of mining lamps from the late 19th century up to the present day. Unique items are not used, nor would banners, commemorative glasses or paintings be used because of their fragility. The service is being developed and approximately 20 loans go out per year. Handling sessions have recently been introduced at the museum and no charge is made for the service.

The museum is willing to loan objects from the main collections for groups to handle, though prefers them to borrow a loan box.

There are working items of machinery on display on which annual maintenance checks are made. Risk assessments are carried out on all objects used with the public and guidelines are developed for safe use.

**Contact:** Victoria Coxon, Assistant Museums Officer, Woodhorn Colliery Museum, QEII Country Park, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9YF  
**Telephone:** 01670 856968

### 26. York Archaeological Trust

At the Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), operated by York Archaeological Trust, handling sessions are offered to schools, adult education classes and museum staff. Objects dating from the Roman and Viking period are used to interpret the National Curriculum subject Invaders and Settlers. On average 20-30 sessions are organised per year. No charge is made for the service, but organisations who can afford it are asked to make a contribution which can be up to £100 for a lecture.
Cotton gloves are provided for handling the objects and people are asked to handle objects carefully because they are unique. Finds and conservation staff regularly check objects. Vulnerable metals are not handled but presented in Perspex boxes filled with Plastazote.

The hands-on exhibits in the museum were developed for children in year six studying the Vikings and a combination of objects, replicas and modern materials are used.

Objects are not secured in any way as it is felt that this will encourage theft, but it is emphasised that the material is unique and important. Knowledgeable volunteer staff are available at all times to help visitors. It is felt that, inevitably, some damage will occur when objects are on open display but skilled conservators can usually repair this. Objects are checked daily and damage is reported to finds and conservation staff who keep records of the checks made. A piece of antler comb was broken, which was repaired and is still being used. A leather shoe sole was torn after five years (250,000 visitors).

Bones have developed polished surfaces through handling and pieces of pottery, bone and shell have become rounded.

Reproductions are used when originals are not available and for vulnerable categories of objects. In principle, any object could be used for handling for maximum public benefit, although human remains are obviously a sensitive area.

Risk assessments are undertaken of activities with objects and there is always sufficient staff on hand to monitor objects and assist visitors.

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Access to, and use of park museum collections must be consistent with NPS policies and procedures. When you consider another use request, carefully weigh all the legal, ethical, cultural, management, scientific, preservation, and protection, documentation, and interpretive issues outlined in Chapter 1: Evaluating and Documenting Museum Collection Use. Monitor all use and handling of objects. Only suitably qualified people may maintain or demonstrate a museum object. Minimize UV exposure, including sunlight and fluorescent lighting. Avoid heat buildup in exhibit spaces and historic rooms by lowering or keeping lights off when they aren’t needed. Don’t allow: Food and drinks. Using Running a Museum in museum training and career development.

Collections Management (by Nicola Ladkin): developing a collections management policy; acquisition and accessioning; deaccessioning and disposals; numbering and marking of objects in the collection; loans condition reports; collections storage; handling and moving collections; photography; insurance; public access to collections; display and exhibition galleries and rooms; research of collections.

The latest development of these is summarised in ICOM’s Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development and supporting guidance, all of which can be accessed through ICTOP’s website at http://ictop.icom.museum/. Establishing a new museum or refurbishing an old one is normally a prestigious event with a high public profile. Its design is expected to reflect this, whether involving an existing building—probably preserved for its own historic or architectural significance—or new premises.

Less obvious is the storage for reserve collections, laboratory and workshop space for exhibit conservation and preparation, facilities for teaching and studying, and offices. Wright, Frank Lloyd: Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, constructed 1956–59; in New York City. © Photos.com/Jupiterimages.

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