



Association of
Independent
Museums

AIM Bulletin

February 2024

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At the heart of
the community**
Conference tickets go on sale!



A crucial time for advocacy

As I write this it is perhaps only slightly too late to wish you a happy new year – although by the time you read it, it certainly will be! All at AIM wish you the best for the coming year, anyway.

We know some of you will be in quieter months, while others are closed for a break for your volunteers, teams, buildings and collections. I have already seen daffodils this year, at the beautiful but chilly cloister gardens of Chester Cathedral, and hope that spring finds all the independent museum community rested and ready for, hopefully, busy times ahead.

At AIM we are preparing for a Westminster election year: a crucial opportunity for advocacy. By which we simply mean understanding what you need and want from government and public funding and then telling those who can make those decisions all about it. Over the coming months all political parties will be having conversations, agreeing what they want to do if they get into power, and making manifesto commitments. This is our opportunity to make sure that independent museums are part of every party's vision for culture and heritage across the UK.

It also likely means, with apologies in advance, more surveys (alongside our focus groups, and conversations with you wherever we can.) I know museums and heritage are surveyed frequently, and that it can be tiresome – we will be sure to explain why we're asking what we're asking and report back what we've done with your information. From

what we've heard over recent months, we think our messages to political parties will focus on three things: the need to 'fund the fundamentals' to enable you to maintain and care for your collections, buildings, and teams; the need to support the full museum ecosystem; and the need for an operating environment that lets you run effective charitable businesses (yes . . . this means tax). From my experience working in the Culture department, I know that these messages are most effective when a sector is united. So, we will also be working with other museums and heritage organisations to ensure our asks are joined up.

In an environment where we are seeing another council in dire straits every week, and with multiple local authority museum closures announced and threatened, independent museums need to support this other part of our sector. We need to help, where we can, share the operating models and successes which enable many independents to thrive with little or no public funding.

As well as asking directly for your views, we do get insights and ideas from what you tell us elsewhere – including your Bulletin contributions. As ever, please do feel that this is *your* Bulletin. We are keen in 2024 to share as many of your stories, reflections and experiences as space permits. If you are interested in contributing or would like to explore any ideas, do not hesitate to drop us a line on editor@aim-museums.co.uk we'd be delighted to hear from you!

Lisa Ollerhead, AIM Director



Front cover

AIM Conference this year is at Black Country Living Museum, one of *The Guardian's* must visit locations for 2024. Join us to explore how heritage is right at the heart of our communities. We'll hear how museums are bringing people together, in ever-more innovative ways. We'll celebrate innovators working with their visitors to uncover untold stories, and hear how museums are bolstering their local economies and infusing their towns, villages and cities with strength and vibrancy. Read more on page 3.



Heritage: At the heart of the community

Black Country Living
Museum, Summer 2023.

Join us on Thursday 13 and Friday 14 June 2024 at Black Country Living Museum for AIM's National Conference 2024.

Together we'll explore how heritage organisations can help build thriving and supportive communities. We'll discover how museums are bringing people together, in ever-more innovative ways. We'll celebrate innovators who are working with their communities to uncover untold stories. Hear how museums are bolstering their local economies and infusing their communities with strength and vibrancy.

What to expect

Approachable, friendly and practical, AIM's conference is the key gathering of the independent sector. Join your peers in the wonderful surrounds of our Host Venue sponsor, Black Country Living Museum. You can expect

- Insights from museums like yours that foster a sense of belonging in their visitors, their advocates and beyond.
- Sessions will cover innovative community engagement projects, growing your audience, co-curation and co-creation, dementia friendly programming, developing an effective public engagement strategy, improving storytelling, addressing challenging topics with care, 'gamifying' young volunteering, building your online community and much, much more.
- Confirmed speakers so far include representatives from Brunel Museum, Hampshire Cultural Trust, Kiplin Hall and Gardens, Museums Galleries Scotland, Historic Dockyard Chatham, Braintree Museum, Powell Cotton Trust.
- A mix of keynotes, panel discussions and interactive breakout sessions will inspire you across two days, along with breaks for networking and browsing the supplier expo.
- Relax at social events on Wednesday and Thursday evening, the perfect opportunity to catch up with colleagues old and new.

Who should come

You! AIM Conference is for anyone working in the heritage sector and we welcome colleagues from all career stages and from all types and size of heritage organisations from right across the UK, not just independents.

Welcoming first timers

We'll be hosting welcome coffee for first timers on Thursday morning, and a lunch for freelance delegates on Thursday.

Prices frozen for 2024

We know times are challenging and budgets are tight, so with the support of all our sponsors we're delighted that we've been able to hold ticket prices at 2023 rates. We've also secured preferable hotel rates for delegates.

Buy your tickets

Early bird tickets are on sale now, with discounts available until the end of April. A limited number of expo stands and sponsorship packages remain, get in touch to find out more!

aim-museums.co.uk/aim-conference-2024

“ It can sometimes be difficult to make connections with other small independent museums . . . attending Conference allowed me to network and reassured me that we are all in this adventure together! ”

“ Friendly, relevant and useful! ”

“ I had a fantastic, informative two days . . . a wonderful opportunity to not only meet other professionals in the sector, but also hear their stories, trials, and triumphs. ”

Thanks to our sponsors
Our Headline Conference Sponsors Bloomberg Connects are joined by Host Venue Sponsor Black Country Living Museum and Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers and search specialists Minerva as Gold Sponsors.

Several AIM members including past and present Trustees were included in the King's New Year's Honours announced last month.

New Year, new honours

Former AIM Trustee Brian Gorski, Board Chairman at The Fusilier Museum, and Colonel Heritage for the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers was recognised with an OBE. Nathaniel Hepburn (pictured), Chief Executive and Director of Charleston and an AIM Trustee was awarded an MBE.

Elsewhere in the sector Richard Deverell, Director of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew was appointed CBE, as were Chair of the National Trust, Rene Olivieri, Richard Broyd of Historic House Hotels and Goodwood's Charles Henry Gordon-Lennox, Duke of Richmond and Gordon. Chief Executive of International Bomber Command Center, Nicola Van Der Drift gained an OBE alongside Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery and Nick Merriman, Chief Executive, English Heritage. The founder of the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, Felicity Dahl becomes a Dame.

MBEs were also awarded to Joseph Galliano-Doig (a keynote speaker at AIM Conference 2024), Director and Founder of Queer Britain; Nicolas Hill, National Conservation Projects Manager at Historic England; Steve Miller, Head of Norfolk Museums Services; and Archive and Manuscript Consultant Joan Winterkorn. Melanie Gardner, Curator at Tullie House Museum, Alexander Ritchie, founder member of the Buchan Heritage Society and Harbaksh Singh Grewal, Vice Chair of the UK Punjab Heritage Association received British Empire Medals.

And it isn't solely individuals who can receive recognition. Last year, volunteers from AIM members Amberley Museum, West Sussex were awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This, the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK, is equivalent to an MBE.

The King's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their



Nathaniel Hepburn, director and chief executive of the Charleston Trust.

communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and, following his accession, His Majesty The King emphasised his desire to continue the Award. Amberley Museum is one of 262 local charities, social enterprises, and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award in 2023.

AIM is keen to support nominations celebrating the breadth of great work in independent museums and heritage.

Honours nominations are submitted to a committee which makes decisions on awards: for museums and heritage this is usually the Arts and Media Committee, currently chaired by John Booth, Chair of National Gallery, and Prince's Trust.

An important element of making a nomination is showing how the nominee has made an individual and unique contribution to their community and the nation by going above and beyond the demands of the job.

For more detail on making a nomination visit honours.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/how-to-nominate

News in brief

New guidance on seeking and securing developer contributions for museum and arts provision in England

Published in partnership with The National Archives, this report explores how museums and arts organisations can engage with the local planning process and officials to secure funding through Section 106 legal agreements (S106) and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), collectively known as developer contributions.

It is aimed at Directors, Chief Executives and Senior Leads with responsibility for the strategic planning, development and delivery of museum and arts organisations across England.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/guidance-seeking-and-securing-developer-contributions-museum-and-arts-provision-england

Bloomin' Brilliant

From 27 April *Bloomin' Brilliant: The Life and Work of Raymond Briggs* at Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft brings

together 30 items from the late author's estate with over 100 original artworks from his 60-year career.

It includes work from Briggs's pioneering titles, including *The Snowman* (1978), *Father Christmas* (1973), *Fungus the Bogeyman* (1977) and *When the Wind Blows* (1982), plus the autobiographical graphic novel *Ethel and Ernest* (1998), delving into the origin and creation of these classic images and stories. Also on show are his drawings, hand-lettered typography, and page designs from his earliest commissions to his 2004 book *The Puddleman*.

www.ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk

New Director of the London Museum of Water and Steam.

Hannah Harte has been appointed Director of the London Museum of Water and Steam.

Hannah (pictured) joins the Museum with just over ten years' experience in senior roles in cultural heritage organisations. Before joining LMWS

she was at the National Trust as Head of Conservation, Collections and Interiors and led on the protection of collections and interiors at over



300 historic properties. Previously, she was the British Museum's first Head of Preventive Conservation. Hannah has held various governance roles in the heritage sector including as Trustee for Icon and is a member of the Fabric Advisory Committee for Lincoln Cathedral.

Winner of HVG Volunteer Leader of the Year Award 2023

The Winner of Heritage Volunteer Group Volunteer Leader of The Year 2023 is Sam Clift, Volunteer Resource Manager at the London Transport Museum. The award recognises innovative and outstanding examples of volunteer leadership and management in the heritage sector and was announced as the winner at HVG's annual conference. Nine volunteer leaders were shortlisted ranging from small heritage sites with nominees responsible for four volunteers to Independent Trusts, registered charities, local authorities and national organisations.



Image Window page spread *The Bear* (C) Raymond Briggs 1994.



The Scottish Crannog Centre has been awarded funds to support remedial timber conservation.

Autumn's round of the AIM Pilgrim Trust grants received 39 applications seeking £195,031 against an available funding pot of £63,500.

AIM Head of Programmes, Margaret Harrison

"Following a successful panel meeting we were delighted to be able to award 18 grants. The demand for support is testament to how important this fund is to members, and we are very grateful to our funders Pilgrim Trust for their continued support of such vital work."

Pilgrim Trust Collections Care Audits

Organisation	Rationale
King Edward Mine Museum, Cornwall	Founded in 1987 and situated within the Cornish World Heritage Site, the museum is run by enthusiastic and skilled volunteers and one paid member of staff who looks after education. They will undertake a full audit of the site and collections to inform future disposals and conservation needs, and help with the cost-effective use of time and resources.
Three Rivers Museum, Hertfordshire	Guidance from a professional conservator led audit will help to inform the conservation needs of the collection and identify any weaknesses in current practices as the team works towards achieving accreditation in 2025.
West Highland Museum, Scotland	The museum has plans to expand, which has reduced the time available to the small staff team to dedicate to collections care. The staff are aware of issues caused by high humidity and objects that require professional conservation. In their own words, " <i>The collections audit will be invaluable, as the assessment will enable us to plan for collections care as we begin our museum expansion.</i> "
The Royal Irish Regiment Museum, Northern Ireland	The collections are due to be consolidated as part of a move to combine three museums and form a charitable collections trust. The focus of the audit will be on one collection based in Enniskillen. The audit will help the new trust establish the collections care needs of the collection and inform their decision-making process.
Sidney Sime Gallery, Surrey	The Sime Gallery is a unique collection of one artist, which tells his 'rags to riches' story. Established in 1956, but mothballed for 40 years, the gallery has been undergoing a transformation since 2009 and is currently in receipt of NLHF funding to help widen its audience. An audit will help them understand the collections care needs of the artwork while they plan for future exhibitions, both at their village hall location and externally at partner venues.
Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust, Berkshire and Devon	The charity was founded in 2008 and cares for a collection of vehicles and complementary objects and archives. The focus of the audit will be on the 40% of the collection displayed and stored in Devon. The organisation is in its infancy and with a large group of volunteers, they view the audit as an opportunity to gain guidance on sector standards to be able to improve collections care.
St Ives Museum, Cornwall	Founded in 1924 and open six days a week, the museum is entirely volunteer run by a group of 70. A new management team has been created from the volunteer pool and the audit will help guide and prioritise collections management as the museum evolves and modernises.

Total: £8,400.00

Pilgrim Trust Collections Care Grants

Organisation	Rationale
Stromness Museum (Orkney Natural History Society Museum)	Seaweed Collection conservation and rehousing at Stromness Museum The museum has seen an increased interest in their seaweed collection. There is a need to upgrade its storage and housing so that the material can be accessed by researchers. They require a conservator to work with them to mount and prepare the collection and train volunteers and staff. £7,831.00
Totnes Museum	Effective storage and cataloguing of the collection This project follows up on the recommendations from a Pilgrim Trust funded audit conducted in August 2021. The museum is aware that the storage of the collections is inadequate and wish to re-pack the complete collection of circa 8,000 objects. £3,355.00
The Apsley Paper Trail/ Frogmore Paper Mill	Space to recover – a new store after the fire/part funding Funding will alter two unused rooms into storage facilities, suitable for framed artwork and flat work. £5,000.00
Malton Museum	Implementing recommendations from the Collections Care Audit Following a Pilgrim Trust funded audit in 2020, the museum was advised to improve their collections care. Funding will buy environmental monitoring equipment and UV film to implement the recommendations. £2,745.00
Ushaw Historic House and Gardens	Securing Ushaw’s Collections Future: Creating a permanent collection store A Pilgrim Trust funded audit highlighted the need to control large fluctuations in humidity and to upgrade aspects of collections care. £4,830.00
The Keep Military Museum, Dorchester	Monitoring and storage uplift project Following a Pilgrim Trust funded collections audit and an audit of their archives, the museum has applied for funding to purchase monitoring equipment and storage materials to improve collections care based on the recommendations of the conservators. £5,000.00

Total: £28,761.00

Pilgrim Trust Remedial Conservation Grants

Organisation	Rationale
Dunkeld Archives, Chapter House Museum	Conservation work of Dr Gutch’s photographic album – Dr John Wheeley Gough Gutch (b1809-d1862) was a surgeon, amateur naturalist, geologist, and pioneer photographer. The photograph album that the museum is seeking funding to conserve dates from 1857 and contains the earliest known images of Dunkeld. The salted paper photographs are of international interest/significance and conservation work is required to stabilise the album and enable it to be displayed and stored safely. £1,200.00
Comunn Eachdraidh Nis	Donald Macleod landscape painting 1908 – The painting was gifted to the museum in 2011. The focus of the museum has been on renovating the museum and store and the volunteers are now looking at the collections needs and selecting significant pieces for conservation treatment. £4,590.00
Radstock Museum	The Coleford Banner – conservation and display – Once conserved the banner will help bring to life the area’s mining and methodist heritage. There are plans to display the piece alongside two other banners and introduce interpretation via film and text to explain its conservation. £5,000.00
The Armit Library and Museum Centre	Refreshing the Tuckers – To conserve two large, framed watercolours and their historic frames. The watercolours have been selected for display in 2025. £4,000.00
The Scottish Crannog Centre	A Space to Grow: Remedial Crannog timber conservation – The Scottish Crannog Centre holds within its collection five 2500-year-old Crannog foundation timbers: these wonderful and unique pieces are rarely found and display clear Iron Age old tool marks. They have been an integral part of the museum story for the past 20 years and are a tangible representation of the Iron Age structures and ways of life that the Crannog Centre explores. £10,000.00

Total: £24,790.00

In this extract from new resources commissioned by **AIM**, Maya Sharma, Programme Manager at Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust (AIUET) and strategic advisor on the **Re:Collections** programme highlights the importance of developing anti-racist approaches across all aspects of a museum's work.

Outcomes not intent: anti-racism in museums

The Welsh government, in *An Introduction to an Anti-racist Wales* describes anti-racism as "... about changing the systems, policies, and processes which for so long have embedded a negative view of ethnic minority people."

Wellcome states "Anti-racism is the active work to oppose racism and to produce racial equity – so that racial identity is no longer a factor in determining how anyone fares in life. Being anti-racist means supporting an anti-racist policy through your actions. An anti-racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups."

Both definitions refer to action and change, to bring about positive changes and racial equity.

AIUET's report *If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes* (p15) offers a useful outline of anti-racist approaches and ways of working for the heritage sector:

- Building ethnic diversity at all levels of the sector workforce and across different roles
- Ethical and respectful collaboration with community groups
- Creating spaces that are welcoming, inclusive and well-used by Global Majority people
- Programing and curatorial work that treats Global Majority histories

as of interest and relevant to everyone, as well as more targeted and specific work focusing on specific histories and experiences

- An honest and unflinching examination of the origins of our collections, houses, and heritage assets
- Exploring the repatriation of items
- A willingness to address the destructive nature of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade
- Recognising and decentring Eurocentric and colonial perspectives
- Actively building more representative collections that include diverse voices and perspectives

Taking action

Anti-racism is about **outcomes not intent**. The summer of 2020 saw a plethora of statements of intent pledging to "do better", but there have been few statements about the subsequent positive changes. What you think and believe is important, but the actions you take (and their impact) are what really matters.

If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes sets out a comprehensive series of practical recommendations. We recommend any heritage organisation wanting to take practical anti-racist steps take time to consider these recommendations

and how they might apply them in their context.

We recognise that no organisation, however well resourced, is likely to be able to take action on all fronts. A good starting point, therefore, is to **arrive at an understanding of where you are now**. Carrying out a review of your organisational practice and culture will show you where you are doing well and highlight the areas for most attention. This review doesn't have to be a major undertaking requiring significant resources, but having some kind of external support may be useful. A skilled consultant or "critical friend" can guide you through the process and provide external challenges if needed.

“What you think and believe is important, but the actions you take (and their impact) are what really matters.”

It's important, once you have an idea of the current state of play, to **make realistic and actionable plans and allocate some resources for this work**. *If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes* found that while 75% of survey respondents had some kind of equal opportunity statement, only 55% of these had a supporting action

plan. Only 14% of respondents had any kind of dedicated budget for anti-racism or EDI work. Museums are unlikely to make any progress without a plan or budget, however simple and modest.

It is also important to **take a whole-organisation approach.**

Many heritage organisations limit their anti-racist work to short-term community engagement or learning projects, or temporary exhibitions for specific events or initiatives such as Black History Month. Such projects can often produce excellent work, but a holistic approach will always bring about a more significant and sustained impact. It's important to think about anti-racism across the whole organisation. For example, you may be putting a lot of work into building ethical relationships with community partners, but have you looked at whether your financial systems allow you to pay them for their expertise and support? Does your café offer kosher or halal food, meaning you can confidently welcome their community members?

Conclusion

While it's deeply uncomfortable to recognise that our sector maintains racist ideas and structures, there are also exciting opportunities in the action we can take to counter these. Museums may need to put time and resources into doing this work, and it may require fundamental shifts in thinking and operations but will result in creative, business, and ethical benefits.

Building an anti-racist organisation won't happen overnight, but it's important that as a sector we remember that this work isn't optional – it should be at the core of our work, along with other anti-discriminatory actions. Above all, we need to move from statements of intent to actions that bring positive change.

This article is extracted from new AIM resources developed by Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust during the Re:Collections Programme.

The second round of Re:Collections grants has just gone live, read more at aim-museums.co.uk/reollections-grants



Dancing in Time: The Ties that Bind Us by London-based artist LR Vandy commissioned by National Museums Liverpool as part of International Slavery Museum's MLK Pop Up series.

AIM administers grants including AIM Arts Scholars Brighter Day Grant funded by the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust and AIM's Conservation and Collections Care and Collection Audit Schemes, funded by the Pilgrim Trust.

AIM grants case studies

AIM Pilgrim Trust Collections Care Grant

The Stained Glass Museum

£5,200

Caring for our stained glass heritage

Following a Collections Care Audit funded by AIM in 2022, this additional project has enabled us to build on recommendations and make a number of improvements to our collections care.

The oldest stained glass panel in the museum's collection, *Bust of a King*, c. 1210, was cleaned and reframed by specialist stained glass conservator Sarah Jarron ACR to improve its internal structural support. New environmental monitors were purchased to enhance existing environmental data collection, including a handheld monitor which measures lux, humidity, and temperature for spot-check monitoring and additional dataloggers for recording humidity and temperature at different points within our onsite store. Further analysis was also undertaken into potentially damaging contamination from bats and mould.

This project has developed our understanding of issues that are unique to the museum's environment within a Grade-1 listed medieval cathedral building. Our visiting conservator investigated the impact of suspected bat urine and faeces from resident bats on some stained glass on display, and examined under a microscope and took samples from objects in store to find out more about surface deposits which had accrued on some of the stained glass windows. Laboratory tests have confirmed suspected mould growth is forming on layers of dirt on top of the glass of some panels in store which were removed from redundant churches in the 1970s and have never been cleaned.



Specialist stained glass conservator working on collection at Stained Glass Museum.

These findings are already helping us to make informed decisions on longer-term collections care. For example, we are currently developing modifications to our display cases in consultation with ecologists and heritage experts to try and reduce the impact of resident bats (which are a protected species) in our gallery. We are also planning to implement a rolling conservation cleaning programme to remove existing and prevent further mould growth.

Jasmine Allen
Director and Curator

Museum of the Isles £5,000

Wireless Environmental Monitoring System

The assistance from AIM was instrumental to the acquisition of continuous environmental monitoring equipment and software. The grant has allowed us to install continuous monitoring software across our seven public galleries and three museum stores. The Museum's galleries and stores are now monitored 24/7 and staff can accurately review the conditions across periods of time. Purchasing this equipment now allows us to view seasonal changes and understand the impact of external environmental conditions within the museum far better than was possible with handheld spot



checks. We can react quickly to changes in environment and by monitoring the collections we can ensure they are conserved in a stable environment both now and in future. The data can be provided to

museums when requesting items for loan and has had a positive impact on the museum's progress towards improving care of our collections.

Linda Spence,
Museum Manager and Archivist

AIM Pilgrim Trust Collections Care Audit

Brunel Museum

The audit was both comprehensive and instructive, addressing not only how to stabilise certain environmental conditions (humidity, lighting, temperature, pests etc.) but also options for better storing objects not on display. A little more focus on collections documentation would have been welcome though the audit has nonetheless given us an impetus to review this. The discursive feel of the audit – framed as a conversation and walkaround of the site with Q&A – rather than a stern formal lecture was particularly productive. We were able to raise concerns and queries and noted advice given. We are also reassured by the generally positive conclusions drawn in the report, showing that there were no great causes of concern and that with a few small improvements and checks, our collections care can be effectively improved.

The realities of working in a small museum mean that our staff necessarily take on an eclectic mix of responsibilities at once. Our de facto collections officer also balances a role as volunteer manager and simultaneously leads on our talks and tours programme for example. This can often mean that collections are overlooked or not given the full attention they deserve, owing to lack of time, resources, or knowledge. AIM's support in providing a collections care audit has allowed us to renew our focus on our objects and has highlighted a clear set of priorities for our collection. We are very excited to welcome new collections volunteers to assist and improve the protection, documentation and exhibition of the Brunel Museum's artefacts stemming from the recommendations of the report. We are very grateful for the support and resources provided by both AIM and the conservator.

Robert Keirle, Museum Operations Coordinator

Saffron Waldon Museum

The grant process was straightforward, with our main concern being able to find a conservator with a natural sciences specialism. Fortunately, our preferred conservator (Lucie Mascord ACR) was available and able to make the journey to us. The audit exceeded my expectations for results and recommendations. The nature of the storage audit was in line with my expectations, and the recommendations reflect the areas of interest that I requested with achievable targets for improvement.

The audit also assessed the storage space more generally and provided recommendations for interim storage in view of a planned redevelopment of the Museum, and best-practice recommendations for new storage based on the issues identified with the current storage space and conditions. The benefits from the audit include a range of recommendations and targets to improve the working and storage environment for our natural history collection, including short-term easy wins, ongoing changes, and medium-term opportunities for training and projects to rationalise our use of space. The audit also gave best-practice targets for future projects subject to major funding.

Altogether, the audit's legacy is to inform our Collection Management Plan and highlight priority areas for collections storage and care. This will make the important bird taxidermy and study skin collection more accessible to researchers and help to highlight stories of interest from around the world for future interpretation.

James Lombard, Natural Sciences Officer



Image by Cowmen on Unplash

Employment law update – what to expect in 2024

AIM Associate Suppliers Hay & Kilner provide a useful round-up of developments in employment law coming in for 2024.

Holiday pay

New regulations came into effect on 1 January 2024 but will apply to holiday years that start on or after 1 April 2024. The changes are as follows:

Holiday entitlement for part-year workers and those with irregular hours can be calculated using an accrual method based on 12.07% of hours worked in the previous pay period. It will be lawful to make rolled-up holiday payments for part-year workers and those with irregular hours providing they meet the relevant definitions.

It has also been clarified that for the purposes of holiday pay for the first four weeks of holiday entitlement, ‘normal remuneration’ will be defined to include commission payments and other payments, such as regular overtime payments. What constitutes a “regular” payment has not been defined, however.

In addition, EU law is to be retained making it clear holidays can be carried over where a worker is unable to take their leave due to being on family related or sick leave or where a worker has not been given opportunity to take the leave. It will therefore be important that employers take

proactive steps to encourage employees to take leave during the year and ensure that they have sufficient opportunity to do so.

Sexual harassment at work

New legislation will create a proactive obligation on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The change is likely to come in October 2024 and Employers should review harassment policies/reporting procedures, deal robustly with any complaints, and ensure that regular training is provided to all employees to demonstrate a proactive approach.

Employees will be able to make complaints to the Equality and Human Rights Commission if no preventative steps are taken and if employers cannot prove they have taken steps to protect workers, employment tribunals will have the right to increase compensation in harassment claims by up to 25%.

Flexible working requests

It has been confirmed that the right to make a flexible working request will become a day one right, scrapping the previous requirement for individuals to have worked continuously for 26 weeks.

Under the new rules, employees will be entitled to make two requests in a year and will no longer have to explain to their Employer the effect the change is likely to have on the business. Employers will also now have to deal with the requests within two months, though the potential reasons

for refusing a flexible working requests are to stay the same. The changes will come into effect from 6 April 2024.

Rights for pregnant employees

The protections given to employees on maternity leave are to be extended to apply to pregnant employees too and will last up until 18 months after the birth of their child. The key protection applies during redundancies where pregnant employees or those on maternity leave must be given priority for suitable alternative employment; one of the few examples of lawful positive discrimination. This change will apply to those returning from adoption leave and shared parental leave too, but the implementation date is currently unknown.

National Minimum Wage

As usual, various statutory rates will be increased in April, most notably the National Minimum wage which will be as follows:

For those aged under 18 – £6.40 per hour

For those aged 18 – 20 – £8.60 per hour

For those aged 21 and over (National Living Wage) – £11.44 per hour

The previous banding for employees aged 21-22 has been removed, meaning those workers previously in that bracket will now be entitled to the National Living Wage.

April will also see an increase in the rates of SSP, statutory redundancy pay and pay during statutory leave. We'll provide a further update nearer the time once those rates have been confirmed.

General election

It is highly likely that there will be a general election in 2024. This may impact some of the above changes, but it could also potentially see the implementation of Labour's "New Deal for Working People" which promises to strengthen rights and protections for workers, ban zero-hour contracts and implement stronger family-friendly rights, amongst other changes.

Get in touch

AIM members are entitled to a free 30-minute consultation so please do not hesitate to get in touch with our Employment Team if you have any questions or queries.

www.hay-kilner.co.uk

Accountability for collections

Guidance and support from Collections Trust

Being accountable for collections is key to maintaining public trust in museums, but it is also a necessity for managing and using objects effectively.

With museums' stewardship of collections under the spotlight, many trustees and senior managers are now looking to review their own organisation's policies and procedures to ensure they meet the standard required by Spectrum and Museum Accreditation.

These standards provide the framework, but exactly how each organisation applies them is dependent on their own in-house policies and procedures. If they are not robustly reviewed and implemented, documentation issues can accumulate, affecting the museum's ability to be accountable for the collections in their care.

The Spectrum standard requires museums to have a written plan to address any documentation improvements, including working towards achieving inventory level information for all objects in their care, and requires governing bodies to consider how they will enable this.

Collections Trust has aggregated resources to help including bitesize videos about *Audit* and *Inventory*,

guidance to develop an effective procedures manual, and advice about *Documentation planning*. You can find these resources at collectionstrust.org.uk/accountability

In addition, Collections Trust is offering an exclusive briefing for AIM members covering the core principles of three Spectrum procedures – *Inventory*, *Audit* and *Damage and loss*.

The session will be led by Collections Trust's Deputy Director, Sarah Brown and takes place on **27 March 2024, 11:00-12:00**

Find our more and sign up to the briefing event here – <http://tinyurl.com/yscwsghed>

Keep up to date with the Collections Trust newsletter collectionstrust.org.uk/newsletter-form

In our final interview with participants on the pioneering Curating for Change programme, we caught up with Jack Guy, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and Claudia Davies, Black Country Living Museum.

Listen to yourself and your ideas

Can you tell us a little about your placement and the work you have been doing at the museum?

Jack Guy – Fellow – Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

My placement was at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery. I undertook a variety of roles, including repacking objects and creating custom boxes for them, redeveloping a gallery, creating sensory packs and trails, being involved in outreach work, helping at the front desk, and being involved in a project called *Concepts have Teeth* that saw virtual visits from the Blackfoot Nation.

Alongside this, my placement was focused on finding and researching objects related to disability history and creating a co-production to produce an exhibition.

Claudia Davies – Fellow – Black Country Living Museum

I am the Fellow at the Black Country Living Museum and started the role back in September 2022. I am based in the Collections Team and balance my time between collections management work and Curating for Change responsibilities. This includes cataloguing and installing for our *Forging Ahead* development where we are expanding the museum into the 1940s, 50s and 60s. There are also responsibilities like pest management, dealing with public enquiries and



Muisca figure, Hastings Museum.

working with a co-production group who have lived experience of disability to create and develop a new historic character. The character will interact with members of the public and tell untold stories of disability, focusing on the social model of disability.

What has been the most positive aspect of your placement, to date?

Jack: I've been really lucky and had many positive moments throughout my placement, from handling First Nation material and learning more about it, to finding objects that have never been out of the store. But I think the most positive aspect of my placement would have to be the support the museum has given me, as I would not have had the confidence or freedom to have done this work without it.

Claudia: I have really enjoyed my collections management responsibilities, as well as having the opportunity to seek out disability stories. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with a fantastic group of co-producers and hear their stories and experiences. I feel that my placement has raised a new awareness of accessibility, and the need to include disability stories into museum programmes.

What learning do you feel you will take into the future?

Jack: My 18 months at the museum has seen me learn a lot from quite a lot of mistakes. The key knowledge I'll take from my placement is to always talk to people. Often conversation can inspire an idea that will benefit the museum and its visitors or highlight an area that you missed.

Claudia: This placement has given me the opportunity to gain the skills I need for a career in the sector. I have really enjoyed working in the Collections Team and closely with other teams across the museum including Programming, Interpretation and Research. This has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the different aspects of museum work, as well as providing me with a diverse range of skills that will support me in future roles in the sector. I feel very fortunate and privileged to have been given this experience.



Claudia at Black Country Living Museum.

What advice would you give any future Fellow (or what advice would you have given yourself!) when embarking on a placement like this?

Claudia: Do not feel pressured into feeling like it is solely your responsibility to seek out disability stories or make exhibitions accessible. It is the collective responsibility of all of those who work in a museum to ensure this, rather than one individual.

Jack: My first piece of advice would be to learn a bit about the area and the museum. Take time to do this; it's valuable and will settle you into the area. Also, if possible, work on the reception for some time, as the feedback you will hear on what visitors like, and dislike, will help you with your project and see other issues that might affect later ideas/projects. The second would be to give yourself time, go to conferences, research other exhibitions in person/online and take inspiration from them. Your ideas will grow from them and affect how you create. The final piece of advice I would give is to listen to yourself and your ideas. If you feel something is needed or there is a better way of doing something, say it. Nobody will laugh at you or ridicule your ideas,

and if an idea doesn't work out, it's probably down to a lack of money – keep the idea for another time or see if there's a grant available that might allow it to come to life.

What's your favourite object in your host museum, and why?

Jack: There are so many fantastic objects, but the one that resonates with me the most is the Muisca figure (pictured) from the Chibcha period (Columbia). I love his design with his coffee-shaped eyes and that you can see some colour pigments on him and imagine how he once looked. I also really enjoyed researching him and finding out that the curved shells on his cotton hat are from prized snails and denote that he is a chief.

Claudia: It is hard to pick a favourite but I think it might be a collection of hearing aid equipment we received from a local donor. It was particularly exciting for me as I am deaf, and it was a great opportunity to diversify our permanent collection.

Building on Curating for Change, new Curating Visibility Fellowships are currently open for applications.

For more information visit screensouth.org/curating-visibility

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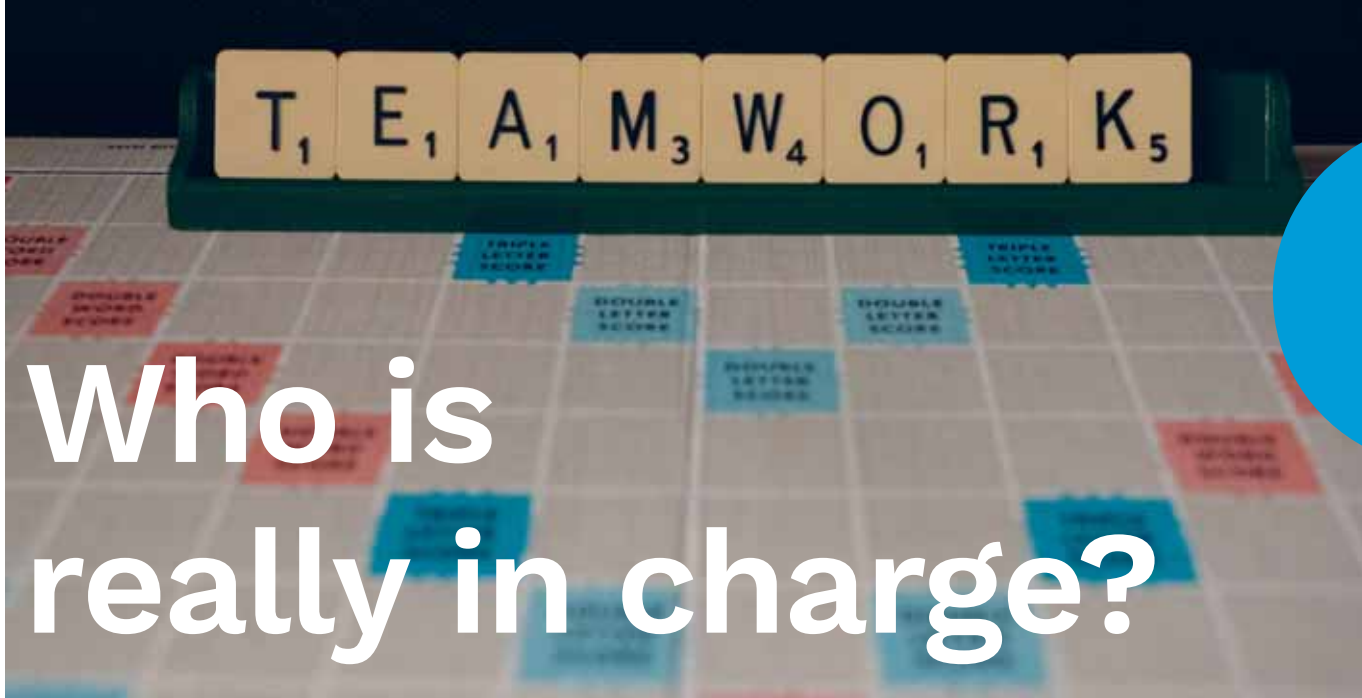
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Who is really in charge?

Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers' Martin Howard looks at some of the key considerations when considering collaborating or working with partners.

It's incredible to witness the creativity, good will, and desire to work together in the museum sector. This article is aimed at exploring insurance issues that may arise when museums work together with other organisations on short term projects, longer pieces of collaborative work, as well as one-off events.

Types of projects

Sometimes museums partner with just one organisation for a specific piece of work, maybe some sort of community project, or with one other museum or gallery in the locality to do outreach work together, e.g. for schools or groups that do not access the arts as much as others do. At other times there are multiple partners involved. I have noticed greater co-operation in large-scale city-wide projects that may be awarded grant funding, and where several museums and other bodies work together, and all have some involvement and thereby benefit from the project.

Add into the mix that sometimes these differing projects, but especially those with more than two partners, enter into contractual agreements with other third parties, maybe to hire buildings or provide facilities. So, there is a multi-layered picture that needs to be thought about when it comes to insurance.

Who is in charge?

With insurance it can be helpful to think about who oversees a piece of work or a project. For instance, if a staff member or volunteer was to be injured or suffer loss whilst carrying out the duties of a project, which organisation were they working for? Where will the Employers Liability claim fall? This is the type of question that should be tackled when a project is in planning phase.

It could be argued that staff and volunteers of both/all organisations are equally involved in a task, but at other times it will be more of a case that one organisation is taking a lead and staff and volunteers from another organisation join in with that work. It's best that you decide whether such staff and volunteers are working for just one organisation in the activity being undertaken, or whether they remain under the supervision of their own organisation. Either way it's wise to declare the facts of the matter to your insurers.

Likewise, a large city-wide project with multiple players involved may present wider considerations if a member of the public was injured. Against which organisation would a Public Liability claim be brought? Having helped a good number of organisations think through these questions, it's normally best if one organisation can lead the project overall and take responsibility for what happens, e.g. training and guidance, risk assessments etc, supervision of what is happening. In such a scenario, staff and volunteers of the other organisations are at that point working for the "lead" organisation in carrying out the project.

But it's not always so easy!

An alternative

Sometimes working out which organisation is in charge is tricky, and there can be a different insurance solution if desired. If the event or project has a formal committee or group of leaders, then in such cases it's easier for them to take out a single "event" policy that covers liabilities and potentially other elements of cover as well like project equipment or contents relating to the event.

Wider liability issues

It's worth adding in that if any group of organisations enter into contracts with third parties that it's wise to seek legal advice, and certainly if any joint financing of projects takes place that you seek financial advice from your accountants. Also, if the projects are delivering any professional services (whether charged for or not) then ensuring your professional indemnity insurers are aware will give you more protection than if you just assume all is ok.

Not the last word

I have only scratched the surface of this important area of collaborative working. The quick take away points to consider are:

- Build insurance matters into project planning.
- Declare projects early to insurers.
- Consider which organisation might lead a project overall.
- Decide if an event policy is a good alternative.

And finally

Do get in touch if you feel you want more advice, and even a review of your wider insurance programme.

Martin Howard Cert CII Account Executive
m.howard@hayesparsons.co.uk

The café as a visitor experience

Paul Smith of Montfort Catering highlights some innovative approaches to refreshing your catering offer.

“Less and less people are going out just for a drink and there are also a significant number that don’t eat out unless it’s part of something more experiential.” These were the words of a successful and long-established restaurateur and bar operator pitching for a catering tender at an iconic cultural venue that we were recently consulting on. It highlights a growing cultural shift towards ‘immersive dining’ and wider ‘experiential’ offers, integrating an activity and experience with food and drink.

At one end of the spectrum there’s the big production: “*Mama Mia! The Party*” – an all-singing, all-dancing theatrical dining experience, with tickets costing in the region of £100 – £200 per person. Albeit on a tighter budget and scale, across many of the cultural venues we advise, we are supporting with the integration of eating and drinking with all-encompassing wider experiences. There are typically two potential approaches:

1. A café or restaurant experience that shares the DNA of the wider attraction, integrating elements of the attraction into the visitor café or restaurant. Black Country Living Museum is one such example, with many of the visitor cafes, restaurants and bars set within period buildings and reflective of the environment that may have been typical at that time.
2. An independent, albeit complementary destination in its own right, although physically part of the cultural venue. One recent commission we consulted on resulted in the appointment of *Jaguar Shoes Collective* repurposing the previous Empire Bar at Hackney Empire with a new concept – *Two Palms*. While the core offer is food, drink, and great hospitality, being a culturally rooted organisation, they also integrate a diverse programme of live events as well as unique exhibitions. The offer is not dependent on Hackney Empire’s audience footfall, but is a unique destination, culturally compatible to their programme which provides a sustainable commercial return to the Hackney Empire.

Experiences can also differ and be turned on and off at different times. Take a few other examples that we have recently been involved with:

- Added value *experience ticket*, covering admission plus ‘democratic’ wine tasting from a local partner organisation – making wine tasting fun and inclusive – an added extra to the main visit.
- Café book clubs – organised by the visitor café operator and actively embracing community engagement. One group even coordinate some of the book choices with the local theatre programme so they can also enjoy a relevant performance reflective of a novel that the group has recently read and discussed.



Jaguar Shoes Collective’s *Two Palms* at Hackney Empire.

- Wellness walks, knitting clubs, spoken word, coffee chats – providing touchpoints for locals to meet and expand their social networks, while often partaking in another activity. It doesn’t always have to be complex or expensive!
- Seasonal ice cream parlour – as well as embracing the recent trend for dessert cafes, this one is also going to be a big hit with those groups booking the ice cream making (and eating) classes. For the rest of the year the venue gets to use the space for its own needs.

These are just a small sample of how integrating experiences into your visitor café or restaurants can provide unique and memorable moments, as well as the potential to develop a strong sense of identity. By doing so you will not only add value to your visitor and public catering but also create a unique proposition and differentiator for your café or restaurant. Additional potential benefits to your organisation, apart from very satisfied visitors include increased footfall, longer dwell time, greater participation, increased spend, repeat visits and an improved commercial return.

While we believe there will always be a place for restaurants, bars, cafes, and the likes to focus solely on great food, drink and hospitality, there are sectors of the community looking for an integrated experience or adventure . . . something different. The cultural sector is perfectly placed to integrate great experiential offers within visitor catering. Ask yourself, what more could you be doing to elevate your visitor café or restaurant to create a strong sense of place?

Do get in touch with Montfort Catering Consultants for an informal chat if you would like to explore opportunities further or discuss how we could support you.

Paul Smith is Founder and Director of Montfort Catering Consultants

www.montfortconsultants.com

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Our volunteers make the museum possible

Martin Baines outlines the story of the Bradford Police Museum.

The Bradford Police Museum is a small independent museum located in City Hall Bradford. Situated on the original site of a Police Headquarters, built in 1874 and operational until 1974, it includes a Victorian court and cell complex and a collection centred around objects used by the past Bradford Borough and City forces previously displayed in the former Bradford police HQ 'The Tyrls'.

In 2007 'The Tyrls' was demolished, and the collection went into storage at Bradford Industrial Museum where it would remain until 2011. A new police contact point established in City Hall in 2011 meant I and other volunteers could establish a new place to share Bradford's policing and criminal history – The Bradford Police Museum.

Since its opening in 2014 we have welcomed the public from March to November every Friday and Saturday, and group tours and school visits during the week. We run several events which extend our offer including a highly successful ghost tour based on historical characters and actual occurrences in our cells and court. We recently developed a court reenactment of a Victorian murder that took place in Bradford in the 1880's called 'Trial by Jury' and a walking tour of Bradford's historic crime locations.

Visitors to the museum can also enjoy guided tours of the Victorian court and cells – including one from which

escapologist Harry Houdini staged an escape in 1904, and which was later used for the TV series 'Peaky Blinders' – before visiting our Gallery (once a police parade room).

There the collection illustrates 150 years of policing in the city. It includes police truncheons, uniforms, swords, weapons, memorabilia, unique images and fingerprints used in 1904 to secure the first conviction outside London on fingerprint evidence alone.

In the Gallery we also display a 1967 Velocette police motorcycle along with four other police motorcycles, a horse drawn Victorian prison van and two police cars (a black 1960 Ford Consul and a 1983 Mini Metro) to form our historic police vehicle fleet.

The museum is entirely run by volunteers. Whilst our past and present tour guides have included former police officers, we now have a mix of people from different backgrounds. The museum receives no public funding – we rely on shop sales, ticket sales for tours and a little grant funding. So, our volunteers make the Bradford Police Museum possible.

Covid was an extremely challenging time for the museum. We slipped through the support available for the sector. We hadn't previously asked for lottery funding; we only had working towards accreditation status, and we didn't own the building.

Prior to Covid the museum had around 5,000 visitors each year, numbers have yet to recover to those levels although they are steadily increasing. However, with support from Museum Development Yorkshire and our own fundraising the museum made a strong recovery.

The museum has always been exceedingly popular with visitors receiving Tripadvisor certificates of excellence and appearing on their list of top ten Bradford visitor attractions. Last year, the museum appeared in *The Times* list of best small museums in the UK.



In 2023 we launched our 'Diversity and Policing, a shared history' exhibition which tells the evolving story of the relationship between the police and minority ethnic communities in Bradford over the last 50 years.

Funded by AIM's New Stories New Audiences grant on behalf of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we partnered with Bradford's Race Equality Network and existing engagement networks who worked with us to help make our museum more relevant and inclusive.

Now with our accreditation application in we are looking forward to Bradford's City of Culture 2025.

Dr Martin Baines QPM
Director Bradford Police Museum
www.bradfordpolicemuseum.com

Top: A court re-enactment forms part of the museum's popular event series. Above: Bradford Police museum explores over 150 years of city policing.

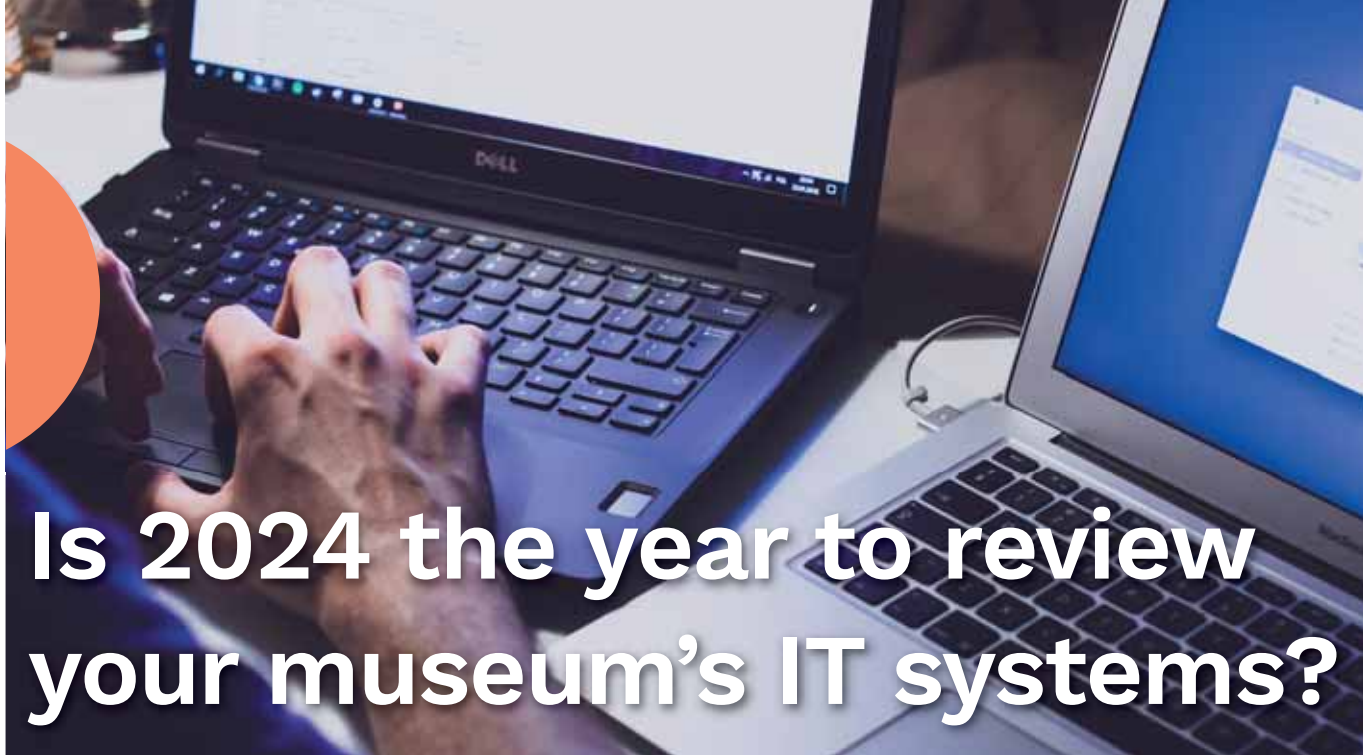


Image by Freestocks on Unsplash

Is 2024 the year to review your museum's IT systems?

Are your commercial technology systems truly offering you the best return on investment asks

Rod Barlow, specialist in practical digital support for museums.

Independent museums utilise a wide range of technology, more perhaps than most of us think, and there are some new great innovations on the market at very affordable prices. These modern solutions can help make us more efficient, more profitable and improve our visitor, staff, and volunteer experiences. Let's focus on a few areas for potential improvement.

Ticketing and Admissions

During COVID there was a significant uptake of online ticketing systems to help manage controlled re-opening and timed ticket entry. Despite that challenging period, many haven't looked back and have continued to push online admission and event ticketing harder to get more revenues in advance, plan resources better and offer upsell opportunities. Online ticketing now accounts for over 70% of purchases and many see secondary spend in shops and cafes increasing from visitors who have prepaid for entry. The ticketing system market is crowded and there are some attractive options even for the smallest museums.

Membership Management and Fundraising

Growing the membership base and raising funds through building advocacy of museums has been a hot topic in the last couple of years. There are some great new technologies

that have come onto the market that not only make the mechanics of this easier by automating the subscription process and managing direct debits; but can also take information from other systems such as ticketing, retail and catering to provide greater insights into visiting behaviours. A recent study by IMPACTS Experience in the US concluded that members have a 4.5x monetary value to museums than general visitors and that almost 63% lapsed members intended to renew on their next visit. A good membership system will help improve renewal rates significantly.

Retail and eCommerce

Online shop technology for museums was another area that saw massive growth during COVID. There are some great low-cost options for joining up the physical gift shop with a professional online shop that are not onerous to manage. Many at a cost less than a traditional shop only EPOS system. For museums with a gift shop, a well-run online shop could add 10-15% of additional retail income and allow you to reach a wider audience through new emerging shopping channels.

Summary

Overhauling your commercial technology solutions should be a high priority for those museums who want to increase commercial profitability, grow the membership base, become more efficient and improve the visitors experience in transacting with you . . . and these new generation of systems are very affordable.

Rod Barlow Digital Consulting specialise in providing practical support to cultural organisations looking to overhaul or improve their use of digital systems.

www.rodbarlow.com

AIM Bulletin

Editor MATT SMITH
Email: editor@aim-museums.co.uk

Contact AIM

Online: www.aim-museums.co.uk
By phone: 0333 305 8060
By post: AIM Postal, PO Box 181, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 9DR

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