

Paper Summaries

Contemporary Collecting: challenges and opportunities

Collecting Contemporary Science, Technology and Medicine

Sam Alberti, Keeper of Science & Technology, National Museums Scotland

‘Something could be modern or it could be in a museum’, the writer and collector Gertrude Stein is said to have observed, ‘but it could not be both’. Museums today struggle against this misconception, and those who manage science, technology and medicine (STM) collections face particular challenges: hazards, scale, immateriality and complexity.

This paper, however, will focus on the *opportunities* presented by the material culture of 21st century STM. Exhibitions can use contemporary material to tell stories as well as explain technicalities. We can connect with visitors using everyday objects or put ‘difficult’ material into context, while starting from a place of familiarity for visitors, whom we know can find STM daunting. In so doing we can challenge their ideas of what a museum does.

Modern Materials in Medical Archives: Problems and Solutions

Emily Hick, Special Collections Conservator, Centre for Research Collections, University of Edinburgh

The increasing amount of plastic in our collections is a growing concern for conservators and archivists. This paper outlines the problems caused by modern materials found during a year-long Wellcome Trust-funded project to conserve Lothian Health Services Archive’s UNESCO-recognised HIV/AIDS collections, and presents innovative storage solutions to these issues.

Creating positive change

Unlocking Digital Silos: the open data revolution for cultural heritage

Terry Gould, National Galleries Scotland

In recent years, collections digitisation has become a cause du jour for the museums sector. However, without considering how such digital information can be used and cross-referenced in meaningful ways, we are at risk of merely creating an array of isolated ‘Digital Silos’ which make no real contribution to the engagement of our audiences, or to the meaningful study of our collections.

In this paper, it will be argued that to make the output of these projects truly accessible and usable, we as the sector must embrace an Open Data-first approach to our collections to unlock and truly democratise the narratives of our holdings for all audiences. As part of this, we must foster and encourage the sharing, re-use and even re-mixing of our collections data within contemporary culture. Technical, institutional and legal challenges will also be addressed.

The Fall and Rise of Coastal Communities Museum

Rosemary Everett, Coastal Communities Museum Trust

A museum has existed in North Berwick since 1957 – we will celebrate this 60th anniversary in July 2017. But the new Coastal Communities Museum only came into existence in 2013. The original museum had to close in 2002 as the building no longer met access and safety standards. A sustained and vigorous local campaign never let the local authority lose sight of support to re-open. Now run by a SCIO under a novel partnership model with the council, and with funding from a variety of local and national sources, the museum successfully attracted over 7,700 visitors in 2016.

The paper will chart our history to acknowledge the anniversary, and highlight how the new model could be adopted by other museums/councils in the future. It will look at the challenges and benefits of operating under a contract for services, and at how we sustain an entirely volunteer-run operation.

Panel Discussion: The SMF – A Positive Future

Ross Irving will chair a panel of ex-SMF Presidents & Committee Members discussing the recent past of the SMF and what the future might look like. Our panel will be made up of –

Jilly Burns – Head of National and International Partnerships, National Museums Scotland

Bob Clark – Director of the Auchindrain Trust

Graham Watson – Head of Resources, High Life Highland

Tamsin Russell – Professional Development Officer, Museums Association

Rowan Brown – Director of the Woodburn Charitable Trust

The Audience of the future: engaging with young people

Engaging with young people to create the museum of the future

Laurence Brasseur, PhD Candidate, University of Leicester

Today's young people will make up a large proportion of tomorrow's museum visitors. However, it is widely acknowledged that museums find it challenging to attract and be relevant to young people.

This paper provides a deeper understanding of young people's perspectives and experiences of museums by taking research outside the museum's walls and into their own spaces: Luxembourg youth clubs. This research will reveal young people's visions of a socially engaged museum.

Scotswummin: investigating Scotland's forgotten women with community youth groups

Amy Goulding, Project Development Officer and Núria Ruiz, Digital Development Officer, YouthLink Scotland

Scotswummin brings together five youth groups from across Scotland to examine women of influence in their communities. Its core aim is to engage these low-participation groups with the forgotten history of Scotland's women, and by extension with the heritage sector. An exhibition at Glasgow Women's Library, motions at the Scottish Parliament and Westminster, and a six-month digital content campaign will celebrate their influential women, both now and in the past.

**A Positive Future:
Institutions, Collections and Audiences**
26 April 2017, National Museum of Scotland

This paper will draw on the experience of leading national youth work initiatives to rethink what the “audience of the future” looks like. Particular challenges of facilitating a youth-led research approach in a museum setting will be outlined, and the speakers will share what they’ve learned about weaving together citizenship, creative learning and community engagement – and reveal the honest highs and lows of watching forty disengaged young people become a crack team of heritage detectives.