



University
Museums
Group

University Museums Group Survey Report COVID-19: Beyond the Crisis?



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INTRODUCTION FROM THE UMG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

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University Museums Group (UMG) represents the interests of university museums, galleries, and collections in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our member organisations comprise a wide range of sizes, collections, and stakeholders but we are united by our links to universities, and our strengths in research, teaching, and public engagement.

University museums and collections play an important role spanning the Higher Education and Cultural sectors, and linking universities with their local, regional, and national communities. This unique position within the cultural and higher education sectors brings many benefits to our stakeholders but also means that our challenges and needs are also distinct from those of other cultural organisations or university departments. University museums occupy a unique position within the museum sector in that they can collaborate internally with other university departments, enrich student teaching and learning across the curriculum, and co-produce research, and research-based public engagement programmes and exhibitions. But they are also distinct from other departments of their parent universities, receiving some funding from them but also heavily dependent on external funding from grants, commercial income, and philanthropy.

The aim of this survey report, and the 2020 one which precedes it, is to understand some of the unique challenges and opportunities being faced by university museums, galleries, and collections during the COVID 19 crisis and to provide a basis for discussing these with our stakeholders.

This report shows the continued effects of the crisis on university museums, particularly around income, capital works, and research and teaching, but also brings into focus some of the benefits of new ways of working which has increased the geographical reach of our collections, and our teaching and research. The shift to digital has not been universally easy though, and members reported a need for skills training and knowledge sharing to spread these benefits across our sector. A move to hyper-local for other forms of stakeholder engagement has resulted in strengthened place-based relationships with specific public and community groups and students. The richness of responses to this survey around the role of university collections in supporting health and wellbeing in our communities points to an area of growth and impact within our sector: our position bridging universities and cultural spaces make us ideally placed to deliver evidence-based and effective programmes to enhance the wellbeing of the communities in which we are embedded.

The responses to the survey also highlight to us areas in which further work is needed to understand the needs of our sector. Of the 28 responses to our survey, only three were from smaller collections which do not currently receive support from the Research England Higher Education Museums and Galleries (HEMG) fund. Although we didn't find any systematic difference in their responses, we want to ensure that we listen to and represent all our members. We also acknowledge a need to understand the role of university museums in addressing the global challenges of the future, particularly climate change, global health and inequality; these are topics that were beyond the scope of this survey but important for us to understand and address.

Nicola Kalinsky

Xa Sturgis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The first UMG COVID report “Assessing the Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on University Museums” was published in May 2020 and reported findings from a survey of University Museum Group (UMG) members. This new report presents findings from a second survey, one year on (surveyed in April 2021).
- In total, 28 museums and galleries took part in this study, representing 14 universities, 676 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and 4.03 million visitors.
- Visitor numbers across responding organisations as reported in April 2021 had dropped to around 25% of pre-pandemic levels.
- Income from UKRI’s HEMG funding is expected to remain fairly stable, but decreases are currently experienced and anticipated for university and HE investment and grants, commercial activity, and private sector income. Income from public sector grants is forecast to decrease in AY 2021/22 but self-generated and commercial income is forecast to increase relative to the levels seen in the May 20 report by AY 2021/22.
- Staffing has been affected by furlough and recruitment freezes, with the highest impact on visitor services, collections care, and technical roles.
- Disruption to physical access continues to have wide reaching effects on conservation, building works and capital projects, research, and teaching.
- Whilst some respondents reported improvements in public engagement with research through digital programming, many also reported a downturn in ability to support research, particularly from researchers outside their own institutions. This has led to worries about how to provide digital alternatives to facilitate research, and concerns about resourcing on-site visits as restrictions are lifted.
- However, the shift towards digital access has had some positive effects on research and teaching, and is most positively reported in public and community engagement. Digital teaching was reported as accommodating “larger cohorts than is possible in the galleries” and giving reach “in more remote places”. Many museums created innovative activities and customised content for both new and existing audiences.
- The crisis has enabled innovation and new research activity, such as in the emerging area of research on the wellbeing effects of engagement with culture. University museums occupy a unique position within the museum sector in that they can collaborate internally with other university departments to enrich student teaching and learning, and co-produce research-based public-facing activity such as evidence-based wellbeing interventions.
- Looking forward, respondents frequently referred to the need for training and skills around improving digital literacy and sharing of knowledge and good practice between UMG members; access to funding and new income streams, especially during the period in which visitor numbers and commercial income are recovering; and access to information about monetisation of digital assets.
- Respondents requested a role for UMG going forward around providing advocacy with funders and other agencies; assisting with positive messaging around museum re-opening; and coordinating knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practice among members in areas such as digital literacy, and perhaps providing networking opportunities for staff to build back staff professional confidence and wellbeing.

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University Museums Group Survey Report COVID-19: Beyond the Crisis?

The past year has accelerated a fundamental culture shift for our Museum, stimulating us to reimagine our core purpose, and placing care, compassion and healing as foundational to our future. The public generosity, empathy and mutual aid witnessed during lockdown truly emphasised what mattered most: now, more than ever, our ethics of care extends beyond collections, to people, planet, communities, ideas and relationships. We've responded by pivoting our practice - prioritising health and wellbeing across our communities; supporting the public in reconnecting with nature; amplifying our commitment to intercultural understanding and opening the museum to new partnerships and collaborations across sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION

The “Assessing the Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on University Museums” report was published in May 2020 and reported findings from a survey of University Museum Group (UMG) members (referenced hereafter as May 20). This report (referenced hereafter as May 21) presents findings from a second survey, taken in April 2021¹, and follows one year on.

In total, 28 museums and galleries took part in this study, representing 14 universities², 676 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and 4.03 million visitors.

This May 21 report uses the 2021 survey to:

1. Assess the impacts of COVID-19 on university museums;
2. Assess the efficacy and range of support provided to museums to date;
3. Reconsider the likely long-term impacts of COVID-19 on university museums;
4. Ask how might the university museums sector evolve after COVID-19, and how key stakeholders can support such innovation to deal with future challenges;
5. Recommendations for role of UMG.

¹ Creation and distribution of this survey by Helen Marks (University of Manchester Data Manager).

² All quantitative data are shared in aggregate and qualitative responses have been anonymised.

There was varying level of detail in responses and some museums found it difficult to provide answers to all questions due to pressure of time to submit, workload and availability of information. Where a university response has been received for many museums, results were counted either as total or multiplied up as appropriate.

2. PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

14 universities and 28 museums participated in the 2021 survey, compared to ten universities and 21 museums in the 2020 survey.³ These universities and museums are shown in the table below:

Table 1 Showing institutions participating in the April 2021 UMG survey.

University	Museum
Arts University Bournemouth	Museum of Design in Plastics
Durham University	Oriental Museum Museum of Archaeology Durham Castle Museum Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Gallery
Manchester Metropolitan University	Special Collections Museum
University for the Creative Arts	Crafts Study Centre
University of Birmingham	The Barber Institute of Fine Arts Research and Cultural Collections
University of Bristol	Theatre Collection
University of Cambridge	Museum of Zoology The Polar Museum Museum of Classical Archaeology Whipple Museum of the History of Science The Fitzwilliam Museum
University of East Anglia	Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts
University of London	St Georges - Museum of Human Diseases Courtauld Gallery, Courtauld Institute of Art
University of London - UCL Culture	Grant Museum of Zoology Petrie Museum of Egyptology UCL Art Museum UCL Pathology Museum
University of Manchester	Manchester Museum
University of Oxford	The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) Pitt Rivers Museum
University of Reading	Museum of English Rural Life
University of Sheffield	Turner Museum of Glass

The 28 participating museums had a combined audience of 2.279 million visitors for the academic year 2019-20, down from 4.027 million visitors 2018-19.⁴

³ Slightly different set of University museums responded than in May 20. Some Universities provided answers to survey questions that was a combination of individual museums data and aggregated responses. These have been considered in the analytics.

⁴ 2018-19 figure differs from May 20 due to differing responding museums set. 4.187 million visitors previously reported.

Of the 24 museums that provided staffing levels for the academic year (AY) 2020-21 there were a total of 676 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, ranging from one FTE to 169 FTE, down from a total of 684 FTE in the AY 2019-20.⁵

Of the institutions who shared income data at a granular level, nine submitted data for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. The table below gives an indication of how income has decreased since 2019/20. These institutions have a combined 2020/21 income of £35.4 million, which breaks down as follows:⁶

Table 2 Combined income breakdown

Total combined income	2018/19 (£M)	2019/20 (£M)	2020/21 (forecast) (£M)
Income: UKRI HEMG Funding (if applicable)	8.0	8.0	8.0
Income: University and HE investment and grants	11.2	10.1	10.2
Income: Public sector grants (includes Arts Council, Heritage Lottery, Big Lottery)	5.4	6.0	6.6
Income: Private sector income (includes sponsorship, donations, private trusts and foundations)	4.4	4.9	4.1
Income: Self-generated and commercial income	6.0	4.4	2.1
Income: Endowment	4.2	4.1	4.4
Grand Total	39.2	37.5	35.4

⁵ May 20 reports 475.5 FTE in 2018-19. Figure differs from May 20 due to different set of respondents.

⁶ The response to the questions around finance was inconsistent and only the data from those respondents who entered a figure for all columns has been included in the figures, which are indicative rather than exhaustive. This is to ensure that any changes in figures can be attributed to actual figures rather than that the figures were simply missing.

3. IMPACTS

This section addresses the impacts of COVID-19 on university museum workforces, buildings and collections, programme and finances.

a. Summary of impact

COVID-19 has continued to affect every aspect of museum work considered in the survey. The perceived order of severity this year and last is shown in the charts below.

Figure 1 May 21 scale of the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns and Tier or equivalent national restrictions results⁷

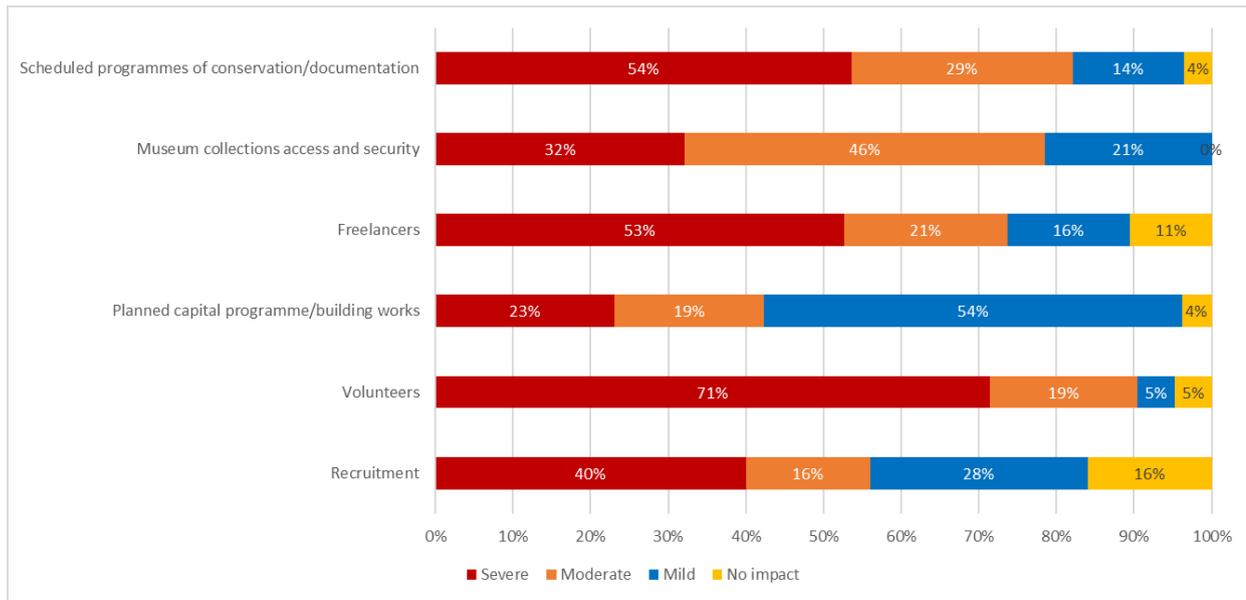
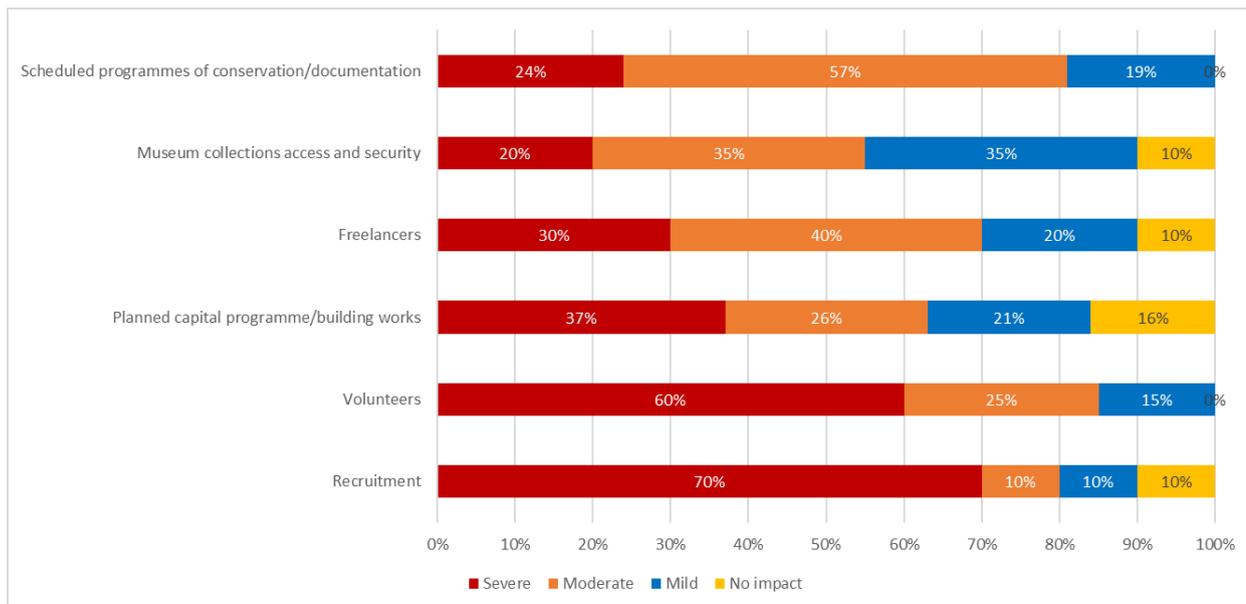


Figure 2 May 20 scale of the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns and Tier or equivalent national restrictions results⁸



⁷ This May 21 report returns include two universities that completed aggregated survey returns. Where relevant for this table the museums belonging to these universities have been multiplied up.

⁸ Updated table since May 20.

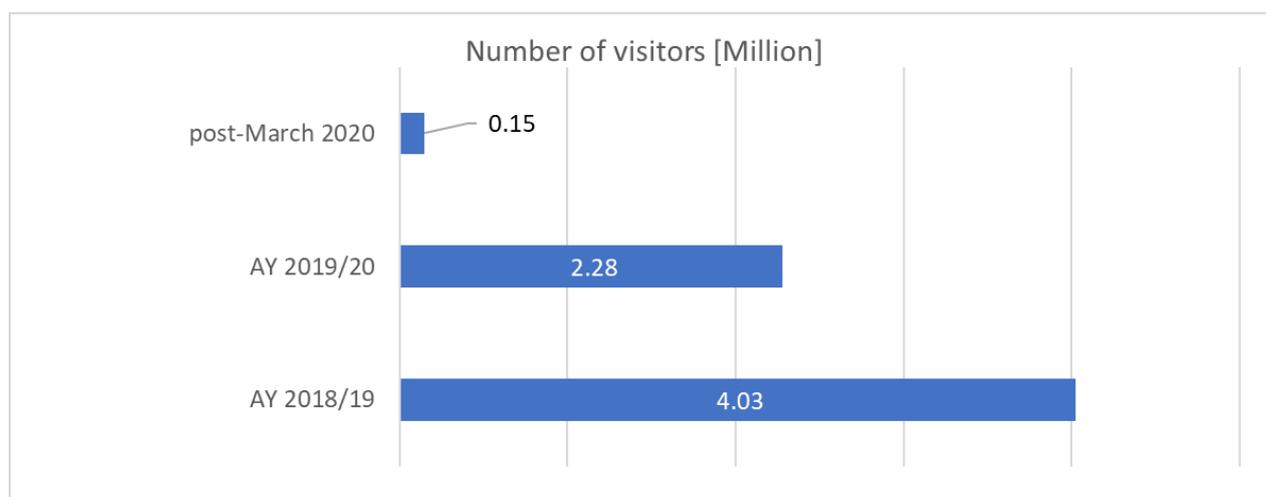
The following trends between the two surveys are observed and illustrated below for:

- **Scheduled programmes of conservation and documentation:** over half respondents reported severe impact compared to less than one quarter previously
- **Museum access and security:** approximately one third of respondents reported severe impact compared to one fifth in the previous survey
- **Freelancers:** a similar trend was seen as for scheduled programmes of conservation and documentation with over half respondents reporting severe impact compared to just over one quarter previously
- **Planned capital programmes/building works:** the number of respondents reporting severe impact reduced from 37% to 23%. Over half the respondents in the latest survey reported mild or no impact
- **Museum volunteers:** out of all surveyed functions, were reported to have the highest COVID-19 impact in the latest report with over 70% of respondents reporting severe impact up from 60% previously
- **Recruitment:** those reporting severe impact dropped from 70% to 40% between surveys, with 44% reporting mild or no impact in the latest survey.

b. Visitor numbers and museum openings

Visitor numbers (AY2019/20) dropped to 2.3M from 4.03M for the same period the previous year (AY2018/19).

Figure 3 Combined total number of visitors



Broadly speaking most university museums experienced around a 40% drop in visitor numbers between the two periods.⁹ This was generally consistent across institutions.

When asked, “Were you able to open to the public in the period following the end of March 2020?” 19 indicated that they opened and 7 indicated that they did not”.¹⁰

⁹ Three institutions did not provide comparable numbers for both years and this has been considered in the analysis.

¹⁰ This ‘May 21 UMG report returns include two universities that completed aggregated survey returns. Where relevant the museums belonging to these universities have been multiplied up.

The majority of those university museums which re-opened, opened in some capacity in September 2020, with three museums opening earlier in the summer when the government relaxed lockdown rules for museums and galleries.¹¹

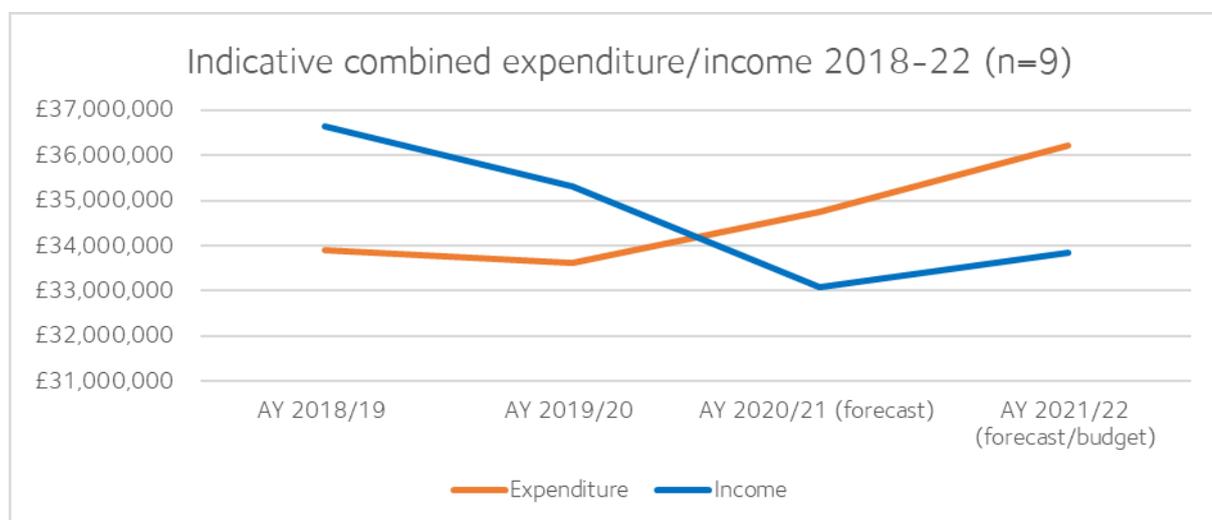
All those that re-opened closed again in December in line with government rules. Therefore, the majority were open for around two-three months during this period.

During the period for which the institutions were open after March 2020, in total there were 150,000 reported visitors. When asked “*What percentage of pre-pandemic visitor numbers did this represent?*”, the institutions reported an averaged figure of 25%.

c. Finances

Overall expenditure vs income: as the chart below suggests, income since 2018/19 decreased but a small increase is forecast by 2021-22. Expenditure is also expected to increase.¹²

Figure 4 Overall expenditure vs income (combined)



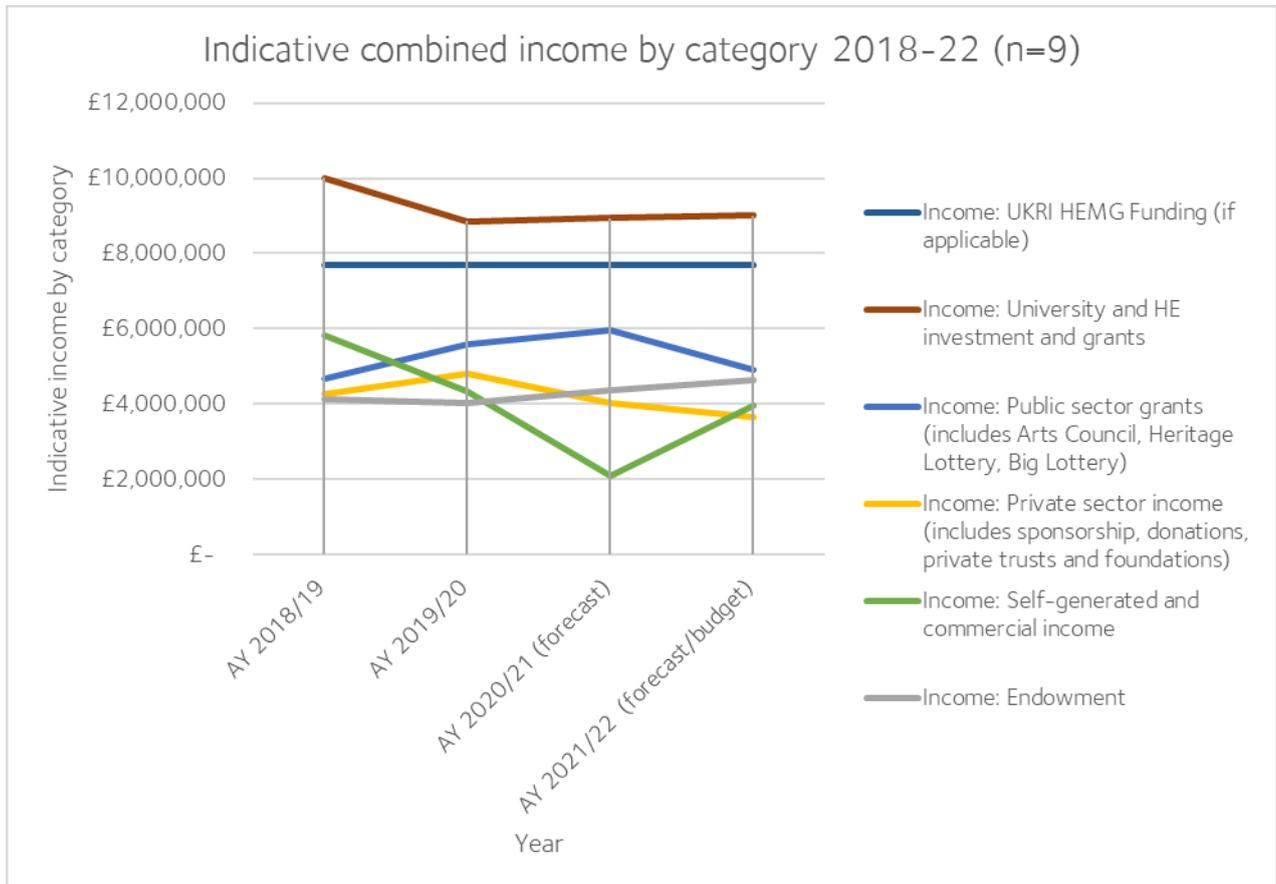
¹¹ For a timeline of UK coronavirus lockdowns, March 2020 to March 2021:

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/timeline-lockdown-web.pdf>

¹² The response to the questions around finance was inconsistent and only the data from those respondents who entered a figure for all columns has been included in the figures and charts below, which are indicative rather than exhaustive. This is to ensure that any changes in figures can be attributed to actual figures rather than that the figures were simply missing.

Overall income: as the chart below suggests, income from UKRI HEMG is expected to remain fairly stable, with decreases anticipated for University and HE investment and grants, and private sector income. Income from public sector grants is forecast to decrease in AY 2021/22 but self-generated and commercial income is forecast to increase in AY 2021/22.

Figure 5 Overall income (combined)



Emergency/new funding: eight out of 20 respondents did not apply for emergency/new funding from the various sector bodies offering support.¹³ The 12 respondents that did apply recorded the applications listed in the table below. This included 11 applications for ACE cultural recovery funding (stage 1 and 2).

Table 3 Indicative number of funding applications by funder¹⁴

List of funding applications: ¹⁵	Total Number	Number success	Number pending	Number unsuccessful
ACE Culture Recovery Fund	11	4	7	
AHRC Capability for Collections Fund	4	4		
The National Archives COVID-19 Archives Fund	2	1		1
UKRI QR Strategic Priorities Fund	1	1		
Art Fund's Respond and Reimagine Fund	2	1		1
West Midlands Museum Development Recovery Grant Scheme	1	1		
Engage	1	1		
CJRS income for furloughed staff	1	1		
arms-length enterprise company, has been able to apply for small business grants, business rates relief and rent relief for one of its retail outlets	1	1		
Esmee Fairbairn	1	1		
Art Fund	1	1		
ACE Cultural Capital Kickstart Fund	1	1		
Museums Association Digital Innovation and Engagement Fund	1		1	
Evolution Education Trust	1	1		
Total	29	19	8	2

When asked for the barriers or reasons for not applying for funding, responses included:

- **eligibility** (e.g. funding was exclusive of university museums, respondents were not at risk of imminent close of business, museum is not open to the public)
- **lack of staff resource**/time to apply esp. due to the short timescales
- expectation of a **low likelihood of success**
- active **discouragement** from applying; and
- **desire not to compete** with smaller museums for local funds.

¹³ The question was in free text format so responses have been cleaned to enable quantitative analysis.

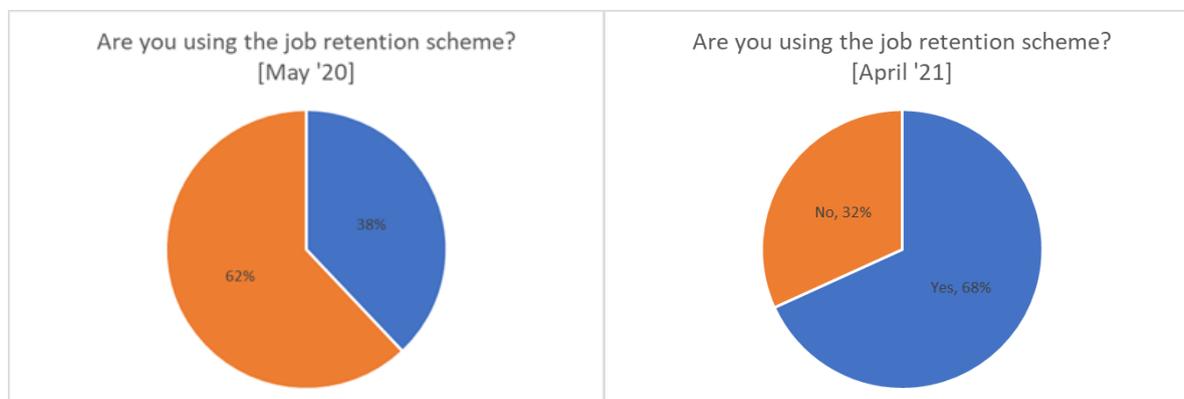
¹⁴ Not enough information on total value of funding applications given to produce meaningful data.

¹⁵ One museum listed "ACE Culture recovery and development fund". This was counted under ACE culture recovery fund.

d. Staffing

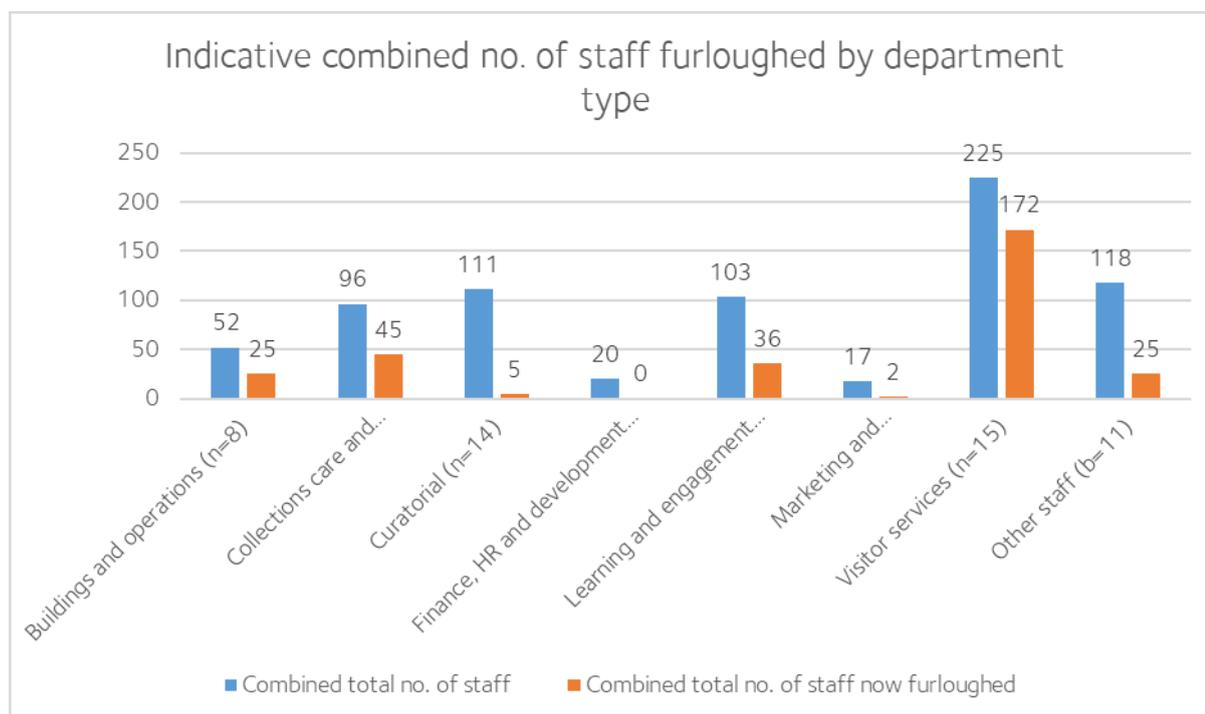
Job retention scheme: as of the date of the survey a total of 308 staff were reported to be on furlough.

Figure 6 Indicative % of institutions using the job retention scheme results from 'May 20 and survey response April 2021



Furloughed staff: as the chart below suggests, the departments with the highest proportion of furloughed staff were visitor services, collections care and technicians, buildings and operations, and learning and engagement.¹⁶ Overall, curatorial staff, finance/HR/development staff, marketing and communications staff, and 'other staff' appear to be the least likely to have been furloughed.

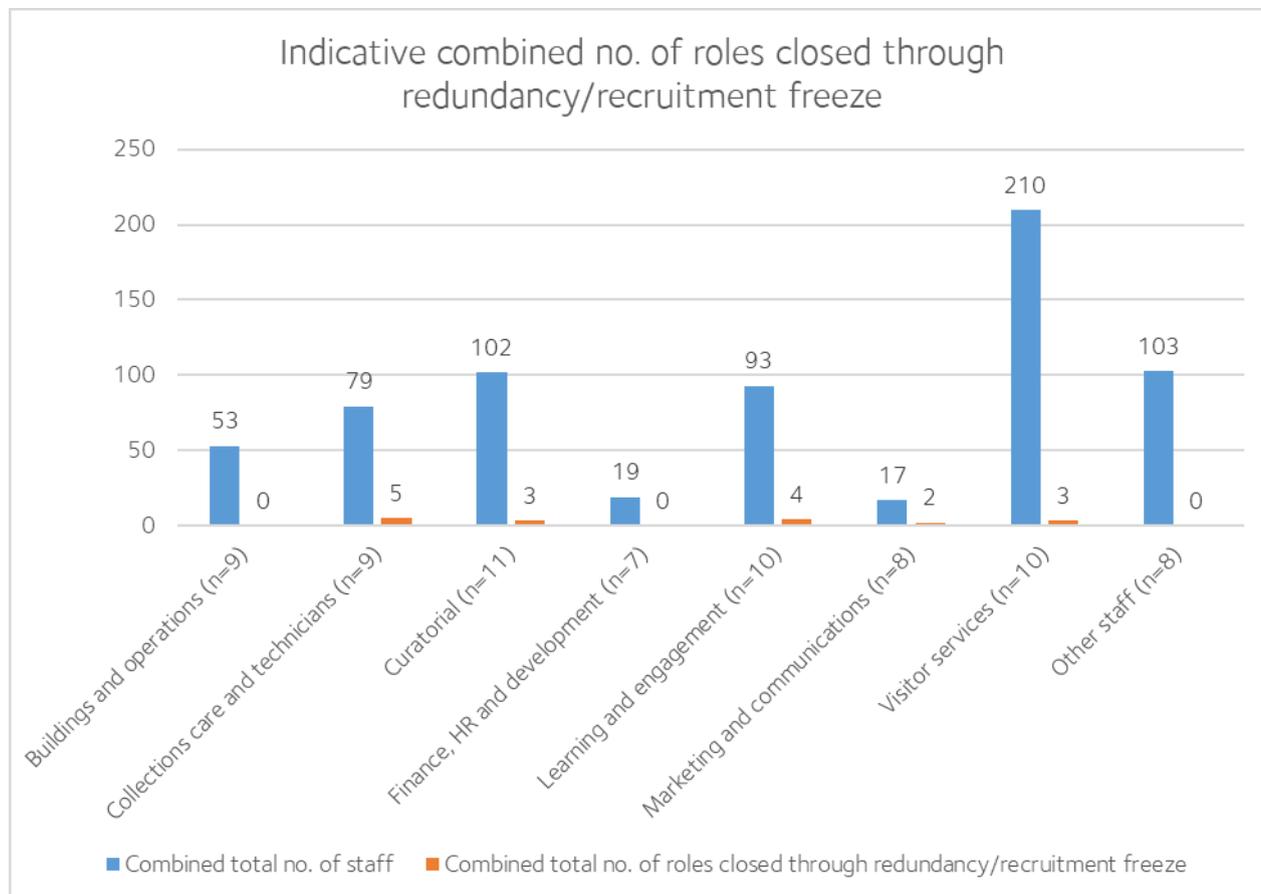
Figure 7 Indicative combined total of furloughed staff:



¹⁶ As with the finance data, the response to the questions around staffing was inconsistent and only the data from those respondents who entered a figure for all columns has been included in the figures and charts below, which are indicative rather than exhaustive. This is to ensure that any changes in figures can be attributed to actual figures rather than that the figures were simply missing. Note that the 308 total above was calculated from responses to Q9 and that the 310 total for Figure 7 was calculated from responses to Q13, hence the discrepancy in the total.

Roles closed through redundancy/recruitment freeze: as the chart below suggests, the departments with the highest proportion of roles closed through redundancy or recruitment freeze were collections care and technicians, curatorial, learning and engagement, marketing & communications, visitor services, and 'other staff'.

Figure 8 Indicative combined total roles closed through redundancy/recruitment freeze



e. Collections security and documentation

Security: there is continued support from estates teams to maintain collections security.

Conservation continues to be limited by lack of physical access with only essential work being undertaken.

Documentation work has mixed reports of being reduced due to the impact of building closures and staff furlough or conversely increased with redeployment of museum staff to work on documentation and cataloguing. This frequently involves staff working remotely, with museum policies and procedures refreshed to enable this.

f. Planned capital programme/building works

In general¹⁷, large capital/building projects in progress have been “impacted directly by COVID-19, resulting in delays and significant cost increases” with continued support from main project funders (including ACE and NLHF) who have, “reiterated their support and flexibility at this current time”. Many museums reported delays to routine maintenance and minor repairs.

¹⁷ Of 18 responses

g. Research and HE teaching

Approximately two thirds of respondents told us they adapted to offer on-site research and teaching during 2020 by offering COVID-19 safe environments, pre-booked slots, reduced capacity and hours in order to enable social distancing, cleaning and quarantine procedures. While offering access, albeit in limited capacity, it appears also that the demand for on-site visits decreased “to a very low level”, described by one institution as “subdued”.

Research: of the 18 museums¹⁸ that stated that they were able to provide onsite access for researchers after end of March 2020, the average was 15 weeks of access and this ranged from two days to 28 weeks. Eight said they were not able to provide on-site access. In the main, on-site research has been limited or ceased completely due to COVID-19 restrictions.

On-site research/access to collections was often available by appointment to members of the University, but not to external researchers. Reports of staff offering an online research function, for example “curator has undertaken significant batches of scanning to provide materials to enable external researchers to conduct their research remotely”.

Teaching: 21 museums¹⁹ responded that they were able to provide onsite access for teaching after end of March 2020 and five stated that they were unable to provide access.

Most notable is that since the beginning of the pandemic the majority have delivered their Higher Education (HE) teaching by shifting completely to digital online teaching with a few describing a blend of “online tutorials and face-to-face labs or object-based sessions”. Only two museums stated that they were teaching in their museum/galleries without mentioning online teaching.

Digital teaching was reported as accommodating “larger cohorts than is possible in the galleries” and giving reach “in more remote places”.

Some university museums reported being able to deliver teaching only to their own HE institution.

h. Community and schools engagement

The survey responses suggested a “pivot” to online engagement in collaborations and partnerships with communities and schools. Museums being involved in producing digital content and online engagement events and activities for community festivals, widening participation with new audiences e.g. Young Persons (YP) and more diverse audiences, accessing the museums through a new “range of digital activities and resources”. Those with outdoor space have often provided physical “open access throughout the pandemic”.

Museums created new content for home-learning and primary school teaching with some museums addressing the fact that they have no digital team so, “the situation required learning ‘on the job’”. Responses reported staff flexing and developing skills to produce digital content, “often taking new images, or carrying out filmed interviews themselves”.

Staff have also been involved with remote teacher CPD, delivering talks and activities.

We have moved events for our Friends Association online, with digital versions of our series of ‘Collections Chats’.

¹⁸ Weighted to +6.

¹⁹ Weighted to +6.

i. Digital innovation

University museums have responded to the pandemic digitally. Many museums have created innovative activities and customised content for both new and existing audiences whether teaching, public engagement or research.

Formats include:

- upgraded and improved online collections and websites;
- tools to create 3D models of galleries and objects, 360 degree photographic tours, “visualiser” for objects;
- webinars;
- online meetings;
- Podcasts and web content;
- YouTube livestreams;
- films of exhibitions.

The survey showed that university museums are looking to continue to build on this innovation by embedding and developing digital interaction. This ranged from strategic change – for example, “the museum has developed a more targeted social media strategy” – to commissioning distinct pieces of work; for example, “a new learning portal for the Museum”.

4. CASE STUDIES

Some of the major themes reported in the varied responses to the survey are best represented in the respondents' own words, as summarised in the case studies below.

a. The shift to digital engagement

Most of the respondents reported changes in the way that they have used digital tools for engaging their users, communities, and stakeholders during the crisis. However, there was a noticeable variability in responses, related to previous investment in digital infrastructure and skills. Some institutions reported an ability to shift quickly to digital engagement, backed up by existing investments in equipment and staff expertise.

New digitisation and digital access capabilities have been secured through the success of a grant application to the Capabilities for Collections Fund and an allocation from World Class Labs. This funding has been directed towards improved provision for digital capture (2D, 3D and AV) and a digitally enabled reading room, including visualisers. The investment in visualisers and digitally enabled reading room has led to successful online Collections Chats, teaching and workshops and we are in conversation with individual researchers to enable them to view materials remotely. This provision enables users to experience something of the materiality of the archive materials in real time.

Capacity piggy backed off the institutional privilege afforded by University infrastructure, which included Microsoft teams and Google suite. Our IT team accelerated delivery of remote access to our collections system from a 6 month cycle to a 2 week turn around and provided training and support for the museum to become a virtual organisation within the first month of lockdown. We developed virtual learning resources for both primary and secondary age pupils, designed for use as part of home learning, and these were shared and used widely by teachers locally and further afield. Look Think Do, our online offer for primary school age children learning at home, achieved more than 25,000 page views in its first few months. We are currently developing a new virtual schools site, in consultation with local teachers, to support remote engagement beyond the pandemic.

The University supported the acquisition of a wide range of hardware and software necessary to allow us to shift our offer online. Online training was also provided.

New online resources were developed to support WSE (including a digital-format Student Art Prize) and collaborative online engagement programmes such as the Summer in the City Festival were delivered. Eleven online exhibitions were created as part of the digital Summer in the City Festival in June and July 2020. These attracted 2480 visitors to end of July 2020 and remain online. They included a range of student, academic and community partnerships. The Summer in the City workshop 'A place to call home' which had 657 participants during July 2020.

As part of the AHRC Being Human Festival in November 2020 GLOW was an evening of exploration of linked themes of light and darkness, harvest and festivals, community and celebration presented via a live YouTube event. While the challenges of the lockdown represented a considerable obstacle, the three-hour livestream reached a global audience, mixing live and recorded footage, and met with an enormously positive response.

We have received several grants to develop digital resources during lock down and have produced a large number of new digital activities targeted at difference audiences – including the AR and VR projects. We have moved to delivering online activity across different areas including development, marcoms, collections and learning. We have produced films of several exhibitions that were closed during lock down including Art Nouveau, Grayson Perry and Art Deco by the Sea with the BBC's Culture in Quarantine.

Shifting to digital very quickly led to a stable global audience – the First Animals series of 11 lectures was broadcast live to 63 countries, with regular attendance from India and Brazil as well as Europe and North America. Data also indicated that people were staying for the whole event, with an average dwell time of 58.7 minutes. 23% of people attended more than one event.

In contrast, some of the respondents reported initial difficulties in making the rapid shift to digital, and responses highlight the need for continued funding availability to enable university museums to continue to adapt and to thrive. The shift towards digital and hybrid engagement is time consuming, and during the shift resources are needed for equipment and staff training.

As we are not very digital yet, access was quite impacted. We did our best to provide digitisation on demand after the first lockdown. We've done what we can, but we also realised how much more we could have done were we to have the right skills and resources.

We have refined our digital skills over the last year and find ourselves in a much stronger digital place than twelve months ago. We have no dedicated digital staff or additional resource, which is a cause for concern, especially when on site programming resumes, but this will be considered within a wider digital strategy. However, we suspect that lack of a 'digital' department may have also allowed us get on with things and experiment as there is much that is accessible. We are particularly pleased with impact of live online workshops. From being completely new to this, we have become experts in delivering the best Zoom experience for small engaged groups and have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, artist and sector colleagues who feel that we are leading the way in this. Staff time as a resource and budget will be the main problem when we shift back to a hybrid.

It has become clear that new investment and skills in digital will need to be a priority and this is informing recruitment, training, new posts in development and external funding bids.

Maintaining the [blended models] and developing them alongside restarting in-person activity will need investment in terms of staff capacity and budget.

b. Community and school engagement

Two major but contrasting effects were reported in community engagement in which success was reported in both global engagement through digital activity, and hyper-local engagement with very specific groups.

To date since March to February, we had a total of 90,327 visits and reached 135 countries and 4,893 cities. In many ways, global engagement and partnerships have been strengthened and alongside, hyper-local engagement, these will shape upcoming work, with a strategic focus on South Asia, China, Indigenous communities in Australia and Americas.

Recovery Art is our adult arts and wellbeing programme. Delivered through free onsite workshops pre-Covid, an effort was made to keep in contact with this group of around 30 people through weekly emails which include online resources and creative activity ideas. In September 2020 it was relaunched as a free hybrid analogue/digital offer. Monthly artist-led workshops inspired by the collection are shared with members via bespoke postal packs containing resources and materials, pre-recorded video workshops and live Zoom workshops.

Particular areas of innovation have been our remote work with audiences with dementia, with SEN young people, with older adults using a phone-based provision, with blind and partially sighted audiences, the work we are beginning to develop with strategic partner schools. These blended models, generally using familiar tech solutions (alongside post and

phone) in innovative ways, offer huge potential for more flexible working in future with a variety of routes to engagement offered helping to overcome physical, financial, geographic and transport barriers, but maintaining the and developing them alongside restarting in-person activity will need investment in terms of staff capacity and budget.

We have developed Our Shared Cultural Heritage, a significant new strand for young people of South Asian heritage funded by the British Council. This started with face to face programme pre-Covid with a core group of young people (YP) involved. From April everything went online and has led to increased engagement from broad and diverse range of YP for whom digital seems to work particularly well, with YP engagement through reading groups, planning and delivering events, training, leading workshops for other YP, meetings, panel session at conference, social media campaigns, blogging, Instagram etc.

During this period the focus has been on live online delivery and the creation of digital learning content. During the Autumn term 2020 the learning team created, delivered, and evaluated a new online learning programme for primary, secondary and FE groups, including the creation of a series of new live online sessions This new programme was successfully launched in January 2021.

c. The effect on research

Whilst some respondents reported improvements in public engagement with research through digital programming, many also reported a downturn in ability to support research particularly from researchers outside their own institutions. This has led to worries about how to provide digital alternatives to facilitate research, and concerns about resourcing on-site visits as restrictions are lifted.

One impact was access to online research resources only, rather than physical libraries. We have not been able to facilitate external researchers except via advice.

Post-COVID we suspect that there will be a marked reduction in external researchers travelling (due to international restrictions, climate emergency and possible reductions in project funding), which will place increased demand on the provision of online resources and virtual meetings to view materials via the visualisers.

Onsite research visits have ceased entirely. Research enquiries have continued as staff either work from home or occasional visits onsite. Use of the collection in CT scanning has continued as the scanning technician has maintained access.

Staff research on the collections took place mostly at home. In the autumn we reached an agreement with Trustees to take low value/low significance materials home to work on in the event of further lockdowns and this has been implemented since January. Research for external lectures and symposia was done at home and these delivered online. Physical research visits were possible for five weeks from late September; in the absence of physical visits, the Curator has undertaken significant batches of scanning to provide materials to enable external researchers to conduct their research remotely.

Staff have been on-site since August and continue to support researchers from around the globe. On-site research access to collections is available by appointment to members of the University, but not to external researchers. Curatorial team time devoted to research support dropped from 223 hours in 2018-19 to 198 hours in 2019-20.

One frustrating issue has been that DCMS guidance has continued to prevent research and teaching access to museum gallery spaces so we face the anomalous position of being to provide access to books and archives but not objects.

Only 4 research physical visits took place after lockdown (September 2020) to the current time. Staff have continued to answer enquiries online, whilst working from home. Object engagement through via video link worked well. It exactly the same experience but it allowed students stuck in different parts of the world to engage with the collection and talk to the curator. This is something we could use in future to engage with researchers across the world. There is a concern that staff and students have 'got out of the habit' of using the museum and relationships will need to be built up again. Being closed to external researchers, groups, and audiences mean opportunities may have been missed.

The museum has intensified its support for research and teaching within the university but has, inevitably, seen in a reduction in requests from other HEIs. Collections research enquiries have shifted from 1:1 physical:digital to 1:9, necessitating the introduction of new workflows. We do not envisage that there will be a return to the same level of physical enquiries, and that the shift to digital is permanent. International collaborations have, if anything, intensified over the last year as partners have sought new ways of working and networking.

Researchers that requested onsite visits were few, we mostly adapted our organisation to ensure we could facilitate online teaching and research visits and collaboration internationally. COVID-19 restrictions have impacted on the usual research-access-facilitation in many ways, requiring extra consideration and planning. There has been a push towards more flexible ways of working, with last minute cancellations by researchers becoming more and more likely due to changes in restrictions. (In-house) Research continued throughout the pandemic but was hindered significantly due to the lack of access to a live-database, personal office-libraries, and especially due to the inability to travel and do any fieldwork internationally. Disrupted research-networks impacted severely on staff and research programmes, leading to several funded research projects (with African institutions; in India; in St Lucia; and with Australia and New Zealand to) to suffer significant damage.

We have not facilitated visits to the collections by researchers since pandemic began.

Both physical and digital access to collections are our primary concerns. Covid has demonstrated to us the challenge of managing dispersed collections and the benefits of digitised collections and archives.

However, the crisis has also enabled innovation and new research activity, such as in the emerging area of research on the wellbeing effects of engagement with culture, and other major societal issues such as environmental responsibility. University museums occupy a unique position within the museum sector in that they can collaborate internally with other university departments– in the medical sciences, for example – to enrich student teaching and learning, and to co-produce research-based public-facing activity such as evidence-based wellbeing interventions. For example,

We analysed online cultural content created in lockdown from across the world to start to look for common features or approaches. We ran qualitative research using surveys and focus groups with target users to try and identify the neural mechanisms or 'ingredients' (how and why something works) as well as thinking about the usual UX components of enjoyability, accessibility and navigation. What was most important to users were human-centred narratives and having the freedom to engage with different perspectives that challenged the echo-chambers and polarising nature of social media forums. Users wanted to get inside the lives and experiences of others who had likewise experienced exclusion, overcome hardships, and who had perhaps expressed themselves through art or another medium.

[Project] Health is our flagship Art Fund-supported Covid-recovery project, a programme of arts activity delivered by a multi-disciplinary team in and with our local communities. It builds on our previous experience of working in the area of health and wellbeing and our existing connections with the School of Nursing. [Project] Health has four interconnecting strands: a Nurse-in-Residence, Death and Dying Community Conversations, Care Home Outreach and a Social Prescribing Project. Our inaugural Nurse-in-Residence is a senior lecturer and registered nurse who specialises in palliative and end of life care. The N-i-R will use our major works of art to inform community healthcare and to enrich medical training. Digital and pop-up conversations will use the collection to explore responses to death, dying and bereavement in collaboration with relevant charities, University Hospitals [city] and GP practices and involve student volunteers from the University's Med School. Local care homes will be offered virtual gallery tours, live-streamed art workshops and Covid-safe tactile boxes for sharing. The project draws on our position as a public museum within a major HE provider training 1000s of medical students every year. We have funding only for 2021/22 and need further and ongoing support to embed the work and take it beyond a 12-month 'response', valuable through that is. We will be looking to our University to help support this innovative work for another two, three years. This in turn raises the question of HE museum funding, a fixed sum eroded by inflation and which predominantly supports four universities.

The past year has accelerated a fundamental culture shift for our Museum, stimulating us to reimagine our core purpose, and placing care, compassion and healing as foundational to our future. The public generosity, empathy and mutual aid witnessed during lockdown truly emphasised what mattered most: now, more than ever, our ethics of care extends beyond collections, to people, planet, communities, ideas and relationships. We've responded by pivoting our practice - prioritising health and wellbeing across our communities; supporting the public in reconnecting with nature; amplifying our commitment to intercultural understanding and opening the museum to new partnerships and collaborations across sectors. This year saw the launch of [an agency] focused on tackling ageism and supporting England's arts sector to ensure the right to creativity in later life is embedded in their work. Cross sector working and hyper-local engagement has been a key focus. [For example, the] Museum is now a registered specialist college in partnership with an education charity and has remained open during lockdown to provide learning for neuro-diverse young people, [and is involved in] building ecological action in partnership with local communities.

There is a concern that staff and students have 'got out of the habit' of using the museum and relationships will need to be built up again.

Diversity, inclusion and relevance: with pressures on funding and recruitment, we have to ensure we find ways of continuing to diversify the workforce and invest in programmes which address diversity and inclusion.

The principal challenge is to rebuild our visitor base and recover our commercial income. In normal times the museum is fortunate to have up to 30% international visitors on a given day, and we anticipate that this audience will be particularly slow to return to pre-pandemic levels. Modelling with the University finance office suggests that financial recovery will not be complete until 2025.

The success of digital engagement has the potential to put the collection at risk.

BUILDINGS/CAPITAL PROJECTS

A further challenge is around the fabric of museum buildings, whether **ongoing or planned capital projects** or essential **building maintenance**:

A major concern is the building itself, with a growing list of remedial projects. Whilst funding this is a university responsibility, if this is not addressed via a comprehensive masterplan, it may result in many years of disruption.

Delivering the museum building project, already delayed, at a time of social distancing, is hugely challenging.

STAFFING

And finally, **staff resource**, **staff wellbeing** and (lack of) **digital literacy** is another significant challenge/concern. For example:

Staff wellbeing - the long tail of lockdown impact.

Stretch on staff resource – delivery of online and hybrid teaching is time consuming.

Long term the stand-out opportunity is an acceleration in digital, which brings with it a great challenge in terms of skills and fluency. It also demands an adaptive workforce who are comfortable reframing their work and roles to incorporate an increasingly larger digital element.

b. What other support do you need right now [aside from emergency funding]?

The key categories of support which came out of the data analysis were **training & skills** (incl. knowledge exchange) and **funding**, followed by **advocacy**²¹ and the necessity of **continuing support of the host university**.

TRAINING AND SKILLS

The most frequently occurring theme under training and skills was around improving **digital literacy** and sharing of knowledge and good practice between UMG members. For example:

Knowledge exchange opportunities and potentially partnerships for digitisation, community engagement and research on digital engagement tools.

Training e.g. on digital platforms, good practice, etc, e.g. on digital platforms, good practice, etc

²¹ Advocacy will be covered below under Section 6: Role for UMG later in report.

Other themes included guidance on **safe re-opening**, developing leadership around **environmental responsibility**, rebuilding staff **professional confidence**, and developing **new income streams**. For example:

Support and investment to develop environmental and climate leadership work in the museum and across the city.

Training, development and networking opportunities for staff to help build back professional confidence, networks and wellbeing. Bursary schemes to support this?

Help with developing new income streams. Consultants help with online retail sales and product development – retail generally. Building partnerships with other museums to co-develop unique product more cost effectively.

FUNDING

Another frequently occurring theme was around **access to/information about funding and financial support**. For example:

More funding would make a huge difference to make up for the loss of income generation.

Support to work with others to develop new forms of civic and regional philanthropy.

Continued regular and current updates on funding, changes to guidance etc.

Specific schemes mentioned included AHRC’s Capability for Collections Fund (CapCo), Cultural Recovery Fund (e.g. extension of the CRF Round 2 delivery window beyond 30 June 2021), Museums Maintenance, Estate and Development Fund (MEND), and Museum and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief.

c. What will the long-term impacts be for your museum?

Figure 10 Word cloud created from responses to Q46 (long-term impacts)²²



²² ‘Impact’ has been removed from the list of words.

The most frequently occurring long-term impacts were around **finances, research/teaching, public engagement/learning, international collaborations, staffing, digital, and organisational structure**. A small number of respondents stated that it was too early to say what the long-term impacts will be.

FINANCES

Responses were mostly negative in this category, with themes including worries about **financial instability** and uncertainty around future financial situation, **loss of funding**, and a **more challenging environment**. For example:

Current modelling suggests that the museum will not return to a stable financial position until 2023/24. At present, the university is being very supportive and there is no immediate threat to staffing levels but, inevitably, pressure will come to bear the longer the financial instability continues.

I expect severe impact on finance, teaching, research, staffing and audiences especially with new cuts, pensions and Brexit.

On a more positive note, a small number of museums commented that they are currently being well supported by their university, although flagged that pressure (on staffing) may come to bear the longer the financial instability continues. The support from their host institutions again illustrates the unique position of university museums in both the museum and university sectors. University museums receive some internal funding from their parent universities but they are also heavily dependent on external funding from grants, commercial income and philanthropy. Their fortunes are therefore dependent to an extent on those of their university, and their perceived role within the university but they are also deeply affected by changes in the external funding landscape.

RESEARCH / TEACHING

Issues around the future of research and teaching were mixed, with some museums reporting on the negative side that **teaching load has remained heavy** particularly with the move to digital, which has caused some **changes in working practices** and **increases to staff workloads**. For example:

The museum has intensified its support for research and teaching within the university but has, inevitably, seen in a reduction in requests from other HEIs. Collections research enquiries have shifted from 1:1 physical:digital to 1:9, necessitating the introduction of new workflows.

On a more positive note, themes around research and teaching related to the **potential for digital** with regard to **international discoverability** and **increased online engagement**. For example:

We do not envisage that there will be a return to the same level of physical enquiries, and that the shift to digital is permanent.

We will be doing, delivering and engaging more online: from research outputs, to couriering collections, to engagement programmes.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT / LEARNING

Responses around public engagement and learning were mostly positive, with museums flagging the importance of **digital for widening engagement**, a new **focus on different audiences**, including opportunities to work with **hyperlocal communities**, in-person and digitally, and the importance of **marketing**:

Using digital to reach existing and new audiences and exploring hybrid models is something we will continue. The Zoom phenomenon flattened out the usual dominance of London and enabled far better communication and sharing of sector experiences, bringing greater, not less, visibility to [our] work.

Potentially we will have a better museum with improved labelling/story telling/ better cataloguing etc...

Our longer-term survival requires us to regain visit numbers as quickly as possible, for which investment in effective marketing is vital ... Evidence of consumer behaviour during autumn 2021 opening suggests good levels of local public interest for onsite visits have been retained – our garden and social and learning spaces helped ensure that visitors were safe to enjoy high quality experiences even with restrictions. By maintaining our marketing we believe visit numbers will pick up and our online programmes are strongly placed to shift to onsite or to a blended offer.

On a less positive note, some museums cited **adaptation/reduction/cancellation of exhibitions/programmes**, and the **decrease in international travel** and the potential **impact of social distancing** on visitor numbers. For example:

International travel has been impacted the most and is not likely to resume quickly. It is also likely that visitors will in future expect a more generous capacity to exhibitions and galleries, and less accepting of crowding.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Respondents were generally positive about the potential long-term **impacts on international collaborations**, although there is still scope to explore the most appropriate **format** for these. For example:

International collaborations have, if anything, intensified over the last year as partners have sought new ways of working and networking.

The pandemic has accelerated digital development and international collaborations. In many ways, global engagement and partnerships have been strengthened and alongside, hyper-local engagement, these will shape upcoming work, with a strategic focus on South Asia, China, Indigenous communities in Australia and Americas.

More opportunities through digital, but it feels like we need to find a format that works.

However, another respondent highlighted the **disruption to exhibition projects** with international partners as a result of the pandemic and one respondent flagged the potential **impact of Brexit** on the desirability of UK museums as potential partners:

[Brexit] is also likely to impact on international collaborators being able to receive funding that includes UK as a possible partner institution.

STAFFING

Staffing and the impact of **furlough/redundancy** and the accelerated **switch to digital** will have further long-term impacts in the sector. For example:

The long term impact of loss of expertise and staff will not be redressed for many years.

Staffing focus will change, with less traditional engagement.

We see the development of the website and increased use of online content as a growth area, but we want to stay true to the value of showing original works for study and viewing.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING

New ways of working relating to **positive changes to internal/external relationships, potential income streams, and teaching** (again relating to digital) was another theme. For example:

Openness to/appetite for change: opportunities to change established ways of working for the better, and to build on closer working relationships with the University's museums and other public facing institutions established during the pandemic.

Opportunities to grow retail and enterprise business, and appetite for doing this.

Opportunities to revisit and enhance teaching models to exploit opportunities generated by host HEI's investment in new technology and training.

Additional opportunities were around the potential for **more sustainable solutions regarding buildings/masterplan, developing fundraising opportunities, and supporting well-being** on campus and in the community.

6. ROLE FOR UMG

The survey respondents in general expressed a need for UMG to **provide advocacy** with funders and other agencies. For example:

The support needed is long term and sustainable funding and effective advocacy. There is also an opportunity to engage with other similar projects and developments for UMG campaign/advocacy to promote the distinctive role and contribution of university museums to [cross-sector working and hyper-local engagement].

Significant advocacy with funders (including HE) focused on future sustainable investment.

Continued advocacy to UKRI to support University Museums as this constitutes around a third of our museum costs.

Advocacy with ACE, HEMG, AHRC and other major funders to ensure the constraints on delivery and impact for the post-Covid period are fully understood and factored into their expectations and assessments, along with flexibility on deadlines for completing projects and expenditure.

Additional roles for UMG which arise from the survey responses include assisting with **positive messaging around museum re-opening** (survey response: 'Positive marketing about Covid-safe museums') and a role in **coordinating knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practice** among members in areas such as digital literacy, and perhaps **providing opportunities** for staff to build back staff professional confidence, wellbeing and networks.