



## *London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank:* **Introduction to Museums Handouts**

These handouts were written by Jane Seaman ([jane@janeseaman.co.uk](mailto:jane@janeseaman.co.uk)) on behalf of the London Museum Development Team. Jane is a freelance trainer, consultant and writer specialising in volunteer management issues.

Jane has produced the 'Introduction to Museums Handouts' to be used in conjunction with the 'Introduction to Museums Presentation' and the 'Introduction to Museums Training Plan' available on the London Museum Development Team's Volunteer Training Bank ([www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank)).

For more information on how to use these resources to support you to train your volunteers, please read the 'How to use the Training Bank' and the 'Train the Trainer Guide' documents available here: [www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank)

This half day 'Introduction to Museums' training session is designed for volunteers new to the sector.

The 'Introduction to Museums Handouts' provides the handouts to give to delegates throughout the training session.



## ***London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: Introduction to Museums Handouts***

### ***Handout 1: What is a Museum?***

The Museums Association's definition of museums is:

"They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society."

This definition includes art galleries with collections of works of art, as well as museums with historical collections of objects.

#### ***Other definitions***

1. Depository for collecting and displaying objects having scientific or historical or artistic value
2. A museum is a "permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education, enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment"
3. A building, place or institution devoted to the acquisition, conservation, study, exhibition and educational interpretation of objects having scientific, historical or artistic value
4. An institution which collects, conserves, researches, exhibits, and interprets objects of lasting interest or value for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment
5. Means a public or private non-profit institution which is organised on a permanent basis essentially for educational or aesthetic purposes and which, using a professional staff, owns or uses tangible objects, whether animate or inanimate; cares for these objects; and exhibits them to the public
6. A museum is a "permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the *tangible and intangible* heritage of humanity and its environment, for the purposes of education, study, and enjoyment." (International Council of Museums)



## ***London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: Introduction to Museums Handouts***

### ***Handout 2: Code of Ethics***

Society can expect museums to:

1. Hold collections in trust on behalf of society
2. Focus on public service
3. Encourage people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment
4. Consult and involve communities, users and supporters
5. Acquire items honestly and responsibly
6. Safeguard the long-term public interest in the collections
7. Recognise the interests of people who made, used, owned, collected or gave items in the collections
8. Support the protection of natural and human environments
9. Research, share and interpret information related to collections, reflecting diverse views
10. Review performance to innovate and improve.

The Museums Association updated the Code of Ethics in November 2015, following an 18-month consultation process during 2014-2015. The updated version outlines ethical principles for all museums in the UK.

The new code espouses three essential principles: public engagement and public benefit; stewardship of collections; and individual and institutional integrity. The development of this code has been a collaborative process involving representatives from across the museum sector, funders, interest groups, members of the public and other stakeholders.

This document represents the general consensus of the sector on the ethical standards that are expected of all museums and those who work in and with them. To read more please visit: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>



## ***London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: Introduction to Museums Handouts***

### ***Handout 3: Types of Museums***

There are various types of museums which includes:

- National Museum
- University Museum
- Armed Services Museum
- Local Authority Museum
- Independent Museum
- Historic Houses

Many museums have collections from more than one discipline. A Local Authority Museum, for example, may have archaeological, natural science, art and social history collections. There are single subject museums, such as the Natural History Museum or the Science Museum in Kensington. Museums are often broken down into five main groups; National, University, Armed Services, Local Authority, and Independents.

### **National Museums**

There is no statutory definition of a national museum, but those institutions recognised as such share the following characteristics:

- their collections are of national importance
- they have a board of trustees appointed by Government
- they are wholly or mainly funded by Government

There are 19 national museums in the UK based in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. A number have outstations in major cities. For example, the National Museum of Science and Industry runs the Science Museum in London and Wroughton, Wiltshire, the National Railway Museum in York and Shildon, County Durham and the National Media Museum in Bradford.

The 19 national museums attract a third of all the visits made to museums in the UK and employ a third of the museum workforce.



## **University Museums**

These are owned and run by a university. The first museum to be opened to the public was the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the oldest of more than 300 university museums and collections in the United Kingdom.

London examples are The Petrie Museum and The Grant Museum of Zoology both of which are part of University College London. University museums support and serve the needs of students, teachers, tutors, lecturers and researchers as well as the general public.

## **Armed Services Museums**

These are museums that cover the Army, Navy or Air Force. The collections were originally owned by the armed services. Most are regimental museums and most now have charitable status.

There are about 200 armed services collections held by regiments or by museums of regiments. London examples are The Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon, The National Army Museum in Chelsea and the Guards Museum in Birdcage Walk.

## **Local Authority Museums**

Many county and district councils operate some form of museum service. Many of these were formed in the 19th Century. Local Authority museums vary greatly in size, quality and importance. These museums are often run as part of a larger council department such as leisure services.

There are about 800 museums run by local authorities. About one third of all museum visits are to local authority museums and this sector employs one third of the museum workforce. Local Authority Museums are subject to local authority corporate policies such as equal opportunities, Best Value etc.

Much of the revenue funding for these Museums comes from the County and District Councils. The buildings are normally owned by the Council and they are therefore responsible for maintaining the fabric of the building. London examples of Local Authority Museums are Brent Museum in Neasden, Bromley Museum in Orpington and Hackney Museum in Hackney.



## **Independent Museums**

Independent Museums are those museums typically set up and run as charitable companies. There are approximately 1500 Independent Museums in the UK. A third of the non-national museums that have been designated as museums of national significance, are independent.

Independent museums are diverse, ranging from small local organisations, mainly operated by volunteers to large or national organisations. Their collections are also very varied covering the whole field of museum work with a significant number associated with historic, craft, industrial or transport sites. London examples of Independent Museums are the Old Operating Theatre, Museum and Herb Garret, Pollock's Toy Museum and Vintage Wireless Museum.

## **Historic Houses**

Historic houses differ a great deal one from another. Some are organised around the person who lived there or the social role the house had. Consequently, they may contain objects that belonged to the inhabitants. This approach is mostly concerned with authenticity.

Other historic house museums may be partially or completely reconstructed in order to tell the story of a particular area, kind of life or period in time. This approach is guided by the narrative of the people who lived there. Important to all historic house museums is that the structure once was intended, or at least used, as a place of human habitation, and that the contents of the structure, now a museum, were intended for such places.



## ***London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: Introduction to Museums Handouts***

### ***Handout 4: The Language of Museums***

#### **Acronyms**

Listed below is a selection of acronyms that are regularly used when individuals discuss museum related topics.

#### **DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)**

- DCMS is responsible for Government policy on the arts, sport, the National Lottery, tourism, libraries, museums and galleries, broadcasting, creative industries including film and the music industry, press freedom and regulation, licensing, gambling and the historic environment
- It was the department responsible for 2012 Olympic Games & Paralympic Games.
- DCMS is also responsible for the listing of historic buildings and scheduling of ancient monuments, the export licensing of cultural goods, the management of the Government Art Collection and for the Royal Parks Agency.

#### **HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund)**

- HLF is funded by the National Lottery
- It is run by the Trustees of the national Heritage Memorial Fund
- HLF helps groups and organisations to care for, protect and increase understanding and enjoyment of our heritage. HLF is able to help:
  - Countryside, parks and gardens
  - Objects and sites that are linked to our industrial, transport and maritime history
  - Records such as local history archives
  - Historic buildings
  - Cultural and local traditions
  - Museum collections

#### **MA (Museums Association)**

- The MA was set up by a small group of museums in 1889 to look after the interests of museums and galleries
- Today, it is still entirely independent of government and is funded by its membership, which is made up of individual museum professionals, institutions and corporate members





- The MA provides information through its website and publications, lobbies government and sets ethical standards through its policy department, and offers a comprehensive professional development programme for members wishing to further their careers in museums and galleries
- In addition to this, the MA runs a series of events around museum issues, and holds an annual conference which focuses on current issues and policies affecting museums and galleries.

### ACE (Arts Council England)

- ACE believe that great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better
- They champion, develop and invest in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives
- They support activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections
- Between 2015 and 2018, they will invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create art and culture experiences for everyone, everywhere
- To achieve their mission, they have a 10-year strategy running from 2010 to 2020. It sets out their vision for the future, where they are now and is supported by **five goals** that are at the heart of what they do:
  - **Goal 1: excellence** - Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
  - **Goal 2: for everyone** - Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
  - **Goal 3: resilience and sustainability** - The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable
  - **Goal 4: diversity and skills** - The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
  - **Goal 5: children and young people** - Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

### Museums Job Titles

Job titles vary from museum to museum and therefore you will need to check which ones apply to the museum that you are volunteering in. Job titles also carry different areas of responsibility depending on the individual museum and again you will need to check what responsibilities apply to the various job titles.





For example, the Curator could be the most senior post in one museum but in another this role could be carried out by the Director and there could be several Curator posts spread across the different collections.

- Chief Executive
- Director
- Manager
- Heads of Department
- Curator
- Keeper
- Officers
- Co-ordinator
- Assistant

## **Glossary**

**Access** – usually seen in terms of identifying barriers that prevent participation and developing strategies to dismantle them

**Acquisition** – the process of legally acquiring an item for the long-term collection

**Audience monitoring** – Finding out about your audience

**Collection** – a body of cultural and heritage material. Collections may be physical, non-tangible or digital

**Data Collection** – Gathering information on your visitor

**Collections management** – the organisational approach to balancing collections development, care, access and information

**Conservation** – methods of care or intervention applied to an item with the aim of slowing the process of degradation and extending the item's life

**Consultation** – formal or informal methods of finding out what users think, want or need

**Disposal** – the process of removing an item from the museum's long-term accessioned collection

**Documentation** – the information records about collection items



**Environmental sustainability** – how a museum uses its resources responsibly to minimise its detrimental impact on the natural world

**Forward plan** – a forward-looking document that sets out the detailed aims and objectives of an organisation to be achieved within a defined planning cycle. It is sometimes referred to as a business plan

**Interpretative methods** – the way in which ideas and information about collections are communicated to users

**Key aims** – these are the overarching priorities for the museum to deliver the statement of purpose

**Non-users** – people who do not currently make use of the museum

**Outreach** – activities carried out by museum staff in locations other than at the museum

**SPECTRUM** – the industry standard for collections management, defining agreed procedures for: object entry, acquisition, location and movement control, cataloguing and loans

**Statement of purpose** – defines why the museum exists and who it is for. The statement of purpose may be found within the museum's governance document

**Users** – individuals and groups who make use of the museum's resources or facilities

**Workforce** – the people, both paid and unpaid, who work at the museum



## *London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: Introduction to Museums Handouts*

### **Handout 5: Related Museum Groups**

Below is a small selection of museum related groups. A fuller list of groups can be found in the Museums Association publication 'Museums & Galleries Yearbook'.

#### **BAFM (British Association of Friends of Museums)**

- The only national independent organisation for Friends, Volunteers and supporters of museums, galleries, historic houses and other institutions preserving the UK's cultural heritage.

#### **CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals)**

- CILIP is the membership body for library and information professionals.

#### **Collections Trust – (Formally MDA)**

- The Collections Trust deals with documentation and the management of information.
- It maintains the SPECTRUM (collections management system) standard and provides training and advice for those working in the sector.

#### **GEM (Group for Educators in Museums)**

- This group aims to support and develop learning for all through museums and heritage.

#### **GoSlam (Group of Smaller Local Authority Museums)**

- This group aims to provide a voice for non-hub local authority museums.

#### **London Museums of Health and Medicine**

- This group is a networking and marketing group for medical museums and archives in London.

#### **Prehistoric Society**

- This group aims to advance education and promote interest in prehistory.

#### **Social History Curators Group**

- This group is for museum people interested in all aspects of social history and works to improve the status and provision of social history.



## *London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: Introduction to Museums Handouts*

### ***Handout 6: Volunteer Roles and Expectations***

#### **Volunteer Roles**

There are many possible volunteer roles in which to undertake within a museum setting. This includes:

- Management duties
- Curatorial work
- Fundraising
- Organising and attending events
- Researching and sourcing exhibition material
- Providing guided tours
- Interpretation work
- Non-specialist conservation work
- Marketing
- DIY
- Retail management
- Front of house duties
- Creating and maintaining community links
- Evaluation of visitor surveys
- Library/archive work
- Accountancy work

#### **Expectations**

Museums can offer a volunteer:

- A chance to serve the community
- Meaningful, necessary tasks
- A chance to receive the experience of a professional environment
- Training related to your Volunteer role
- Opportunities for personal growth and development
- Recognition of a job well done
- Opportunities for new friendships
- A shared stake in the success of the museum
- Mutual respect and reciprocal appreciation of motivation, expertise and interests



In return a museum may ask the volunteer:

- To be loyal to the values, goals of the museum
- To follow the procedures and standards for volunteer work
- To serve as goodwill ambassadors for the museum
- To keep confidential Museum information not in the public domain
- To participate in any prescribed training programme
- To be prompt and reliable in reporting for assignments
- To observe the same standards of professional practice as your colleagues in the Museum
- To notify the Museum as early as possible if unable to report for duty.
- If possible, to give the Museum at least 3 weeks' notice of your holidays or your intention to cease volunteering.