



# Sharing Treasures

## An evaluation of the National : Regional Loan Scheme



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LONDON  
museums for  
changing lives

THE  
BRITISH  
MUSEUM  
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Brent**Museum**



Supported through the generosity of the Dorset Foundation

Bronze figure of a seated cat (the Gayer-Anderson Cat), possibly from Saqqara, Egypt, around 600 BC. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

# Thanks & acknowledgement

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## Introduction

This booklet summarises the evaluation of the first loan under the National : Regional Loan Scheme.

The National : Regional Loan Scheme was a pilot project to explore how the London Museums Hub could support and broker partnerships between national and regional museums in London, based on small scale, but high profile, loans.

The London Museums Hub is one of nine regional Hubs funded to lead museum development in their region through the MLA's Renaissance in the Regions Programme. In its 2006-8 *Business Plan* the Hub identified the need to build partnerships between the national museums based in London and the rest of the capital's museum sector.

Whilst many national museums have well-developed loans programmes operating in other regions, it has been harder to establish effective partnership working in London, where the museum sector is characterised by a very large number of relatively small museums. Smaller museums do not have the capacity to take most touring exhibitions and often struggle to meet the criteria for borrowing artefacts from national collections.

### THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT WERE:

- To provide greater access for London audiences, particularly in the outer London boroughs, to the treasures of the national museums
- To raise awareness of the resources of local and national museums in London
- To build capacity in non-national museums, including meeting loan requirements of national and Hub museums
- To further collaboration between national and non-national museums in London, with the opportunity for all parties to learn from each other

### PROJECT SUMMARY: THE FIRST LOAN

The London Museums Hub approached the British Museum's Senior Consultant for Public Programmes who was very supportive and identified the Gayer-Anderson Cat as a possible loan and the possibility of supplementing the Hub budget with a small grant from the Dorset Foundation. The Hub advertised the opportunity to the London museums sector and published a set of selection criteria. Brent Museum was selected on the basis of its strong track record of work with local diverse communities. Although the service had received an HLF grant for new permanent galleries and facilities in 2006, its premises in the Willesden Library complex did not meet the security or environmental standards required for loans from national collections. Moreover recent turnover of senior management and a series of funding cuts meant that borrowing the Gayer-Anderson Cat offered the new Manager and her team a much needed opportunity to raise the profile of the service with local media, stakeholders and visitors.

Following a programme of investment in security improvements and enhancements to the display space, the British Museum lent the iconic Gayer-Anderson Cat to Brent Museum for an exhibition called **Divine Cat – Speaking to the gods in Ancient Egypt**, which ran for eight weeks. The exhibition also included a display of Brent Museum's own local collections, including Egyptian tomb goods, acquired by local businessman and philanthropist **George Titus Barham** in the early 20th century. A programme of public events was also devised to engage the community with the exhibition.

### EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This pilot project required a vast range of support and joint working between the three organisations. This report explores the impact the project had on Brent Museum and the British Museum. It also identifies lessons learnt by the Hub from the pilot programme which will be used to inform planning and delivery of the next stage. Interviews were conducted by an independent evaluator. The report also draws from visitor data and user evaluation collected by Brent Museum. This data is compared with baseline visitor data from a previous comparable temporary exhibition held at Brent Museum ('**Drawn**').

The evaluation findings are organised under a number of key outcome headings – resources, profile, accessibility, skills, knowledge and understanding, and partnerships.







“...one of my aims was to find out if they’d known about the museum before and if they intended to come again, so that was a focused aim in the evaluation and I had a lot of people saying, ‘I didn’t know this was here’ and, ‘Please can we have more?’ and things like that.”

Learning Officer,  
Brent Museum

## Outcomes of the project

### ACCESS TO RESOURCES

One of the aims of the **National : Regional Loans Scheme** was to build capacity in non-national museums. One of the key ways the project did this was to focus resources on areas that Brent Museum needed to address in order to safely and effectively host a high value, high profile loan. The project provided a combination of financial support and specialist advice to Brent Museum, in order to build capacity and achieve all aspects of the exhibition, including meeting loan requirements of the British Museum, creating the physical exhibition, devising the public programme and marketing and communications. The Renaissance funding made available by the Hub was matched with a small amount of funding from the Dorset Foundation which supports partnership work by the British Museum.

The British Museum’s expert in Egyptology provided curatorial advice and helped to interpret Brent Museum’s collection of Egyptian artefacts. This kind of access to a specialist in the field provided an invaluable source of support for Brent Museum.

A suite of marketing materials was also funded by the Hub. This included leaflets to advertise the public programme, electronic flyers, vinyl banners within the museum building, posters, lamp-post banners and adverts in the press. Staff support was also provided and the Hub’s Communications Officer was heavily involved in working with Brent Museum to plan and execute the marketing and communications strategies.

One of the most important principles was that this investment should deliver long term capacity improvements. Financial support from the Hub enabled permanent security improvements to take place within Brent Museum. This included the purchase of a free standing display case to house the Gayer-Anderson Cat for the duration of the exhibition. The case was left with Brent Museum after the exhibition finished, and has already been used in a subsequent exhibition. Brent Museum is keen to look at opportunities to use the case to display other loans.

The success of the **Divine Cat** exhibition was instrumental in the decision by MLA to provide additional funding to Brent Museum from the Local Government Improvement Scheme to develop an audience development strategy.

## Increased profile

The **National : Regional Loan Scheme** was successful in raising the profile of Brent Museum with local people and a range of stakeholders including councillors, internal colleagues, peers at other museums, funders and local press.

### PUBLIC PROFILE

In total, **5,238** visitors attended the **Divine Cat** exhibition, compared with **4,094** that came to Brent Museum’s previous comparable exhibition called **Drawn** (an increase of **28%**).

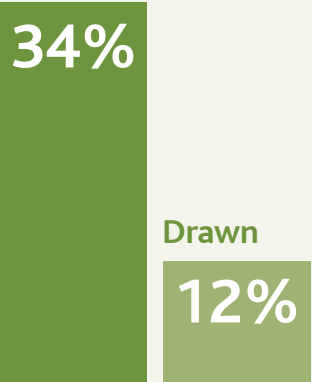
It was found that **65%** of the people surveyed said the **Divine Cat** exhibition was their main reason for visiting Brent Museum. Compared with the **Drawn** exhibition, where only **25%** of visitors came specifically for the exhibition. The majority of visitors that went to **Drawn** were already at Willesden Green Library Centre for another purpose and decided to see the exhibition whilst they were there.

The visitor survey revealed that the **Divine Cat** exhibition was successful in attracting new visitors to Brent Museum as **34%** were first time visitors. This compares with a total of **12%** of new visitors coming to **Drawn**. The exhibition’s association with the British Museum also proved to be influential in attracting visitors. The fact the **Divine Cat** exhibition was a touring exhibition from the British Museum was also found to be the main or one of the main reasons for **42%** of the visitors to the exhibition.

The project also helped to raise the media profile of Brent Museum. The exhibition was featured in Brent Magazine, Willesden & Brent Chronicle, Uxbridge Gazette, the Metro, thelondonist website and a paid for advert in the Guardian Guide. The level of coverage in local media was much greater than usual and has provided the museum with useful contacts with local journalists and editors.

Many visitors to the **Divine Cat** exhibition said they heard about it through the article in Brent Magazine, Brent Council’s monthly magazine for the borough. Street banners that were placed on the High Road in Willesden Green and external signage that was placed on the museum building were also found to have driven people to the exhibition.

### Divine Cat



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“The public saying ‘Can we have more?’, and I think that that was a very, very strong message that came across during the exhibition.”

Museum Manager,  
Brent Museum

Staff at Brent Museum feel that the profile of the museum has been raised through this project:

*“The public saying ‘Can we have more?’, and I think that that was a very, very strong message that came across during the exhibition.”*

Museum Manager, Brent Museum

*“...One of my aims was to find out if they’d known about the museum before and if they intended to come again, so that was a focused aim in the evaluation and I had a lot of people saying, ‘I didn’t know this was here’ and, ‘Please can we have more?’ and things like that.”*

Learning Officer, Brent Museum

### INTERNAL AND SECTOR PROFILE

Staff at Brent Museum felt that involvement in the project definitely increased their profile amongst their senior managers, local councillors and funding bodies. Winning a competitive process has given them prestige internally. They feel this will secure more support for the museum, in terms of their councillors, more opportunities for funded projects and partnership work with other museums in the future. The power of the British Museum ‘brand’ in attracting the attention of stakeholders was demonstrated by the turnout at the exhibition launch. The success of the **Divine Cat** exhibition will lend them weight when applying for funding in the future as they can now refer to its success and have a good track record to quote. In addition, it was felt that the exhibition raised Brent Museum’s profile with the council’s communications team and helped to strengthen internal relationships.

*“Because it puts us back on their [local stakeholders] radar that they think when they have a project they might consider working with us again so that will be really useful.”*

Exhibitions Officer, Brent Museum



## Greater access

**One of the National : Regional Loan Scheme’s aims was to provide greater access for audiences in the outer London boroughs, to the treasures of national museums. The Divine Cat exhibition was successful in achieving this. The exhibition attracted a very local audience, with 72% of visitors living in Willesden Green or Brent. This is highly encouraging as visitors from the outer London boroughs to the British Museum are under represented.**

### REACHING LOCAL AUDIENCES

It was in the area of audience access and development that Brent Museum were really able to make a unique contribution to the programme. In this area, their staff had contacts and expertise which were essential to the success of the project and led to a level of engagement that would have been difficult for the British Museum to deliver on their own.

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Head of London and National Programmes, British Museum

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Teacher

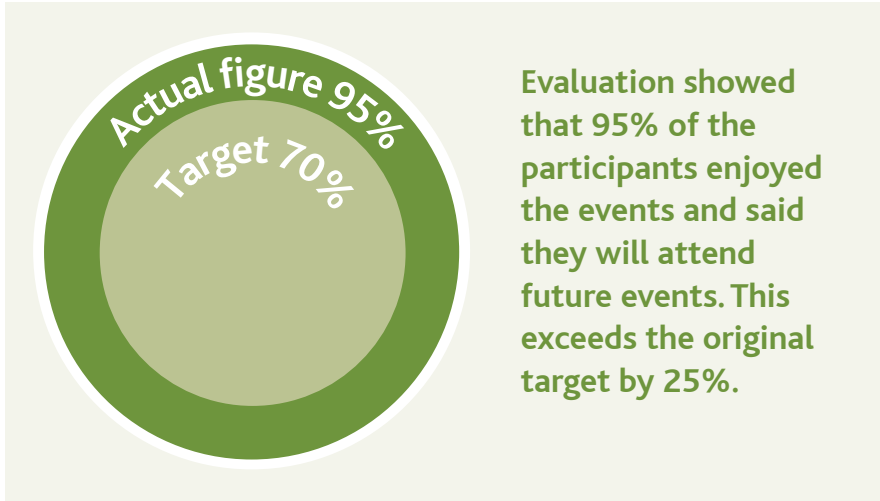
The public programme for the exhibition played a key role in developing local audiences through the scheme. The programme was underpinned by an audience development plan, which outlined quantitative and qualitative targets for each of the four focus audiences: families, primary schools, community groups and lifelong learners. The targets were informed by the Generic Learning Outcomes (part of the Inspiring Learning for All Framework).

The events and audience development work associated with the exhibition reached a total of **4,718** people. The programme consisted of talks, activities and creative projects.

FAMILY EVENTS

Six family events were run during school holidays and weekends (these were free of charge and ‘drop-in’ – no booking was required). The events were craft-based and each focused on a different element of Ancient Egypt. The families filled in personal meaning maps before and after the session, recording anything they thought or knew about the Ancient Egyptians. They also put stickers on a chart with a 1-5 scale to indicate how much they had enjoyed the session, and whether they would visit Brent Museum again.

Brent Museum achieved their target to deliver two open days and four drop-in family events over a two week period during the Easter holidays. They aimed to have **50** visitors at each event. In total **381** visitors attended, exceeding their target. Evaluation showed that **95%** of the participants enjoyed the events and said they will attend future events. This exceeds the original target by **25%**.



SCHOOL SESSIONS

A session was developed for KS2 pupils which focused on what can be learned from archaeological evidence and objects from the past. Using a replica of the Gayer-Anderson Cat, the session explored the different ways in which something can be valuable. The session also included a practical group activity, identifying and finding out more about a replica object using written evidence, photographs and Ancient Egyptian objects from Brent Museum’s collection.

In total, 26 sessions over six weeks of term reached **682** pupils. Additionally **1,164** pupils attended school assemblies on the exhibition. Evaluation revealed that **95%** of teachers felt their class had learnt about the Ancient Egyptians through the session and that the class enjoyed the session. One teacher commented:

“Pupils enjoyed seeing something so old that had a ‘big’ story behind it.”

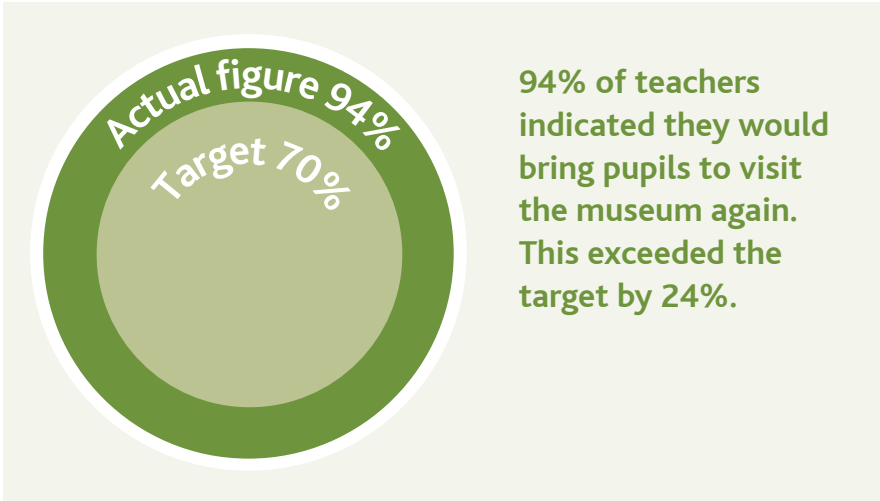


“I didn’t realise museums had so much to offer.”

Participant



The school programme gave Brent school children the opportunity to gain a greater awareness of how museums can support curriculum learning and offered support to an area of the National Curriculum not previously included in provision at Brent Museum. In addition, **94%** of teachers indicated they would bring pupils to visit the museum again. This exceeded the target by **24%**. This gives Brent Museum a very promising platform to build on in relation to increasing its schools visits in the future.



ADULT LEARNERS

A programme of five lectures was arranged to run during the course of the exhibition. Specialists from the British Museum gave lectures on subjects including a scientific look at investigating the cat, metal statuary from Ancient Egypt and goddesses of Ancient Egypt. The curator of the Gayer-Anderson Cat spoke about Gayer Anderson and the object itself. Brent’s Heritage Officer spoke about **George Titus Barham**, Brent’s Victorian collector featured in the exhibition. The lectures were well attended and participants filled in evaluation forms at the end.

In total, **72** people attended the lectures, exceeding the museum’s target by **125%**. Evaluation of the lectures showed that **84%** of participants felt they learnt something as a result of the talks, **97%** of participants indicating they enjoyed the talk and **86%** of participants indicating that they would like to attend future lifelong learning events at Brent Museum.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Brent Museum established new partnerships with community groups, running the same project format with each. A facilitating artist first visited the groups to introduce the project and inspire them with objects and tales of Egyptology. The groups then visited Brent Museum to see the exhibition and to create their own Ancient Egyptian-style objects using high quality natural materials such as pigments, dyes, clay and gold leaf, with a focus on making them look ancient. They were presented with their objects on a visit to the British Museum, where the curator ‘appraised’ them as if they were an authentic Ancient Egyptian collection. The groups filled in evaluation forms at the end of the project.

The target was to work with a minimum of five community groups, with a minimum of four from each attending all three sessions (**20** participants in total). Whilst Brent Museum only worked with four groups, they did exceed their target for the number of people engaged, with an average of ten attending all three sessions (**40** participants in total).

Feedback from the groups revealed that **91%** of participants felt they found out more about their local museum. Participants gained a greater understanding of the role of museums within the community and feel a sense of connection with their own local museum.

Feedback forms showed all participants enjoyed the sessions and **70%** felt they had developed a new artistic skill as a result.

Participants commented:

“I didn’t realise museums had so much to offer.”

“I really enjoyed the very practical day and was very inspired by everything and I have learned a great amount.”

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Participant

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Exhibitions Officer,  
Brent Museum

## New skills

The planning and delivery of the first National : Regional Loan Scheme presented an opportunity to learn new or enhance existing skills and experience new ways of working for all of the parties involved.

For staff at Brent Museum, this touched many aspects of the project from internal organisation and team working, marketing, security arrangements, audience development, display and programming.

As a small museum with a close-knit team, the staff at Brent Museum were used to being able to act relatively spontaneously, being able to make decisions quickly and having a faster turn-around time on projects. Working with a national museum presented a different playing field and the team had to adjust to working within tighter guidelines and longer time scales for planning.

It was also felt that the scale of this project encouraged the team to push their skills further.

*"...it's certainly added to what I've done before... normally the launch is quite small and I felt that this one was on a bigger scale, so it's moving my skills to the next level."*

Exhibitions Officer, Brent Museum

In addition, the extensive planning that was expected at the outset of the project was found to be useful in terms of extending existing skills:

*"[Developing] a really cohesive plan. So that was definitely a skill in terms of time management, people management, resource management, all things I had done before but just being able to do them more cohesively was brilliant."*

Learning Officer, Brent Museum

From the perspective of the British Museum, the opportunity to think about the strategic implications of a loan was found to be very beneficial and influenced their way of thinking about future projects:

*"For me, it was learning from the Hub about a strategic approach to lending. This was rather different because the goal from the beginning with the remit of the Hub was about capacity building and strengthening museum services... that's an approach that I think is going to inform some of our partnership working in the future."*

Head of Regional and National Programmes, British Museum

## Improving knowledge and understanding

Participation in the National : Regional Loan Scheme increased knowledge and understanding for both museums on a number of levels, including knowledge of the collections, the work of the other partners, personal development, colleagues, visitors and programming opportunities.

### AUDIENCE INTELLIGENCE

Involvement in this project gave Brent Museum the opportunity to learn more about their visitors. Previously there was limited knowledge about who was visiting the museum. Following the exhibition, with the opportunities available for improving their visitor survey, Brent Museum feel that they have a clearer picture of who their visitors are, what they want and what they want to see.

In addition, the exhibition gave Brent Museum the chance to try new ways of engaging their audiences. For the first time they engaged adults through a series of lectures which proved to be highly successful:

*"It was interesting that an exhibition geared to adults was really successful, because the museum as a whole is quite a child interactive museum..."*

Curator, Brent Museum



**"...in terms of time management, people management, resource management, all things I had done before but just being able to do them more cohesively was brilliant."**

Learning Officer,  
Brent Museum





**"I also learnt how dynamic and innovative a very small team of people in Brent could be to put on an exhibition that's very impressive, and the attached public programming..."**

Curator in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum

### PERSONAL AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

The partnership gave staff at Brent Museum a new perspective on their personal performance, working as a team and working with other organisations.

It was felt that the project encouraged them to communicate better as team, understand each others working style and push themselves to improve their overall performance. It also helped provide a goal for everyone to focus on and work towards.

*"I think having this project was brilliant for our team, because it made us really pull together, it gave us something really exciting to focus on and to have so much praise. Really good for knitting us together with a new manager and morale building and all those kinds of things."*

Learning Officer, Brent Museum

The British Museum found the partnership enlightening as they do not usually work with museums of this size. It was interesting for them to partner a museum that is focussed on their local audience and able to work with them in a very dynamic way – engaging with the local community, local press and other important stakeholders.

*"I also learnt how dynamic and innovative a very small team of people in Brent could be to put on an exhibition that's very impressive, and the attached public programming and so on, including the schools programme. We're used to working with a lot of people on big teams, on big projects, so it was interesting to see what could be done on a smaller team there."*

Curator in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum

### COLLECTIONS

The partnership enabled both Brent Museum and the British Museum to learn more about Brent Museum's Egyptology collection. Brent Museum were able to call upon the expertise of the British Museum to further their knowledge and explore their collection. This was of great interest to the experts from the British Museum and the learning was mutually beneficial.

### LESSONS LEARNT

In terms of lessons learnt and knowledge that will be taken forward, a diverse range of issues were identified by Brent Museum. Some related to their own personal experience or knowledge and also their working practices. Normally, Brent Museum's exhibition spaces are unstaffed. For this exhibition the gallery was staffed throughout opening hours with a combination of an external security firm and Brent Museum staff. Clearly this will have to be addressed again if Brent Museum wishes to take other high value loans and the use of gallery volunteers was discussed as a possible solution.

*"I intend to take all the things that worked well from each of the four strands [in the Audience Development Plan] and look at how I can build them into what I do on the budget that I have."*

Learning Officer, Brent Museum

The British Museum felt that this experience has shown how they could be more strategic with loans and work with smaller organisations, and make a big impact on a local audience.

*"Maybe it made us, or me, a bit more open minded to doing that [loans to small museums] and pursuing it... I also think it's nice to work with places that aren't the normal places that you always work with. It's just nice to deal with different people."*

Senior Administrator, Ancient Egypt and Sudan Department, British Museum

Both museums also suggested that an alternative way of operating the **National : Regional Loan Scheme** could be to consult with communities in the locality of the host museum to identify relevant themes and choose objects, in order to work even more collaboratively and potentially co-author an exhibition.

Both museums also raised the issue of timescales, suggesting that a longer lead-in time for preparation and also the duration of the exhibition could be extended. The Hub is incorporating these suggestions into its plans for the programme in 2009-11.



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Senior Administrator, Ancient Egypt and Sudan Department, British Museum

“The word partnership gets bandied around a lot, often with the wrong meaning. But I am proud to say that this project involved a really close, strong working partnership with the Hub and the British Museum which we hope will continue for a long time.”

Manager, Brent Museum

## Partnerships

The three parties involved in this project – the London Museums Hub, Brent Museum and the British Museum - felt very positive about the partnership and learnt from one another. The strength of the partnership was that it was a working relationship, rather than one party being the giver and the other the passive recipient. It was a supportive relationship, with regular meetings and open channels of communication. All parties were equally invested in the project and that drove the desire to make the project succeed.

*“The word partnership gets bandied around a lot, often with the wrong meaning. But I am proud to say that this project involved a really close, strong working partnership with the Hub and the British Museum which we hope will continue for a long time.”*

Museum Manager, Brent Museum

The British Museum also found the partnership beneficial:

*“I think it’s been very positive... the Hub have acted as a sort of enabler and facilitator, and the manager overall. We had a relationship with Brent Museum and that relationship has developed very significantly through this, and on lots of levels... they were able to work with our community partnerships team, that’s a very positive relationship that’s developed and will be a lasting relationship.”*

Head of Regional and National Programmes at the British Museum

Other new partnerships have also been forged as a result of this project. Brent Museum have made new contacts with other national museums that they hope to work with in the future. They have also made new contacts with community groups that they hope to involve in future projects.

## Conclusion

The first loan under the **National : Regional Loan Scheme** has been highly successful and this was made possible by the commitment and enthusiasm shown by Brent Museum and the British Museum. The project aims identified at the outset have been achieved through all parties bringing value to the project and contributing equally to its accomplishments. Although the audience numbers will look very small in the context of a national museums conventional visitor figures, the **10,000** or so people who encountered the **Gayer-Anderson Cat in Brent Museum** represent a significant and new audience both to the British Museum and Brent Museum.

In terms of building long term capacity and resources, Brent Museum are now in a position to take on high profile loans in the future thanks to permanent security improvements and a new display case.

Their profile has been raised with stakeholders. The exhibition enabled them to draw in new and diverse audiences, raise their profile with senior managers, local councillors, funding bodies and the media.

The accessibility of Brent Museum has also been strengthened through the project. The response from families, local schools, adult learners and community groups engaged with the museum was overwhelmingly positive and many people said they would return to the museum.

Both Brent Museum and the British Museum have learnt new skills through the project. For Brent Museum the scheme presented an opportunity to push their skills to the next level and try out new ways of working. For the British Museum it offered a chance to think about how strategic loans could be taken forward in the future.

All aspects of the project generated new ideas, learning and information for both museums. For Brent Museum, this means they now have a new understanding of their audiences, the way they work as a team and their collection. For the British Museum it has shown them different ways of collaborating on an object loan.

The project is also felt to have increased the capacity of both museums to improve access beyond the duration of the project. For Brent Museum, this is in terms of their ambitions for future projects, the skills that have been developed within the team, taking advantage of new contacts that have been made in the community and the new ways in which adult audiences can be engaged through events.

This project is a strategically important scheme for London. It has demonstrated that with the correct partnership structure and support, there is tremendous potential for small museums and national museums to work together.

This project will be repeated by the London Museums Hub with loans to at least two more museums from 2009-11. Both the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery have agreed to participate in the project. Museums will be selected following an open application process, security and other improvements made in 2009, with a view to securing loans in 2010.

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Head of Regional and National Programmes at the British Museum

If you would like to find out more about the  
**National : Regional Loan Scheme**, please contact:

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