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Executive Summary

One of the major challenges faced in developing museum and university partnerships is the lack of knowledge of the breadth and scope of the museum sector and its collections. Often partnerships are developed with larger museums, or continue on the basis of familiarity.

Between 2015 and 2016 NCCPE MUPI partner, Share Academy, developed a digital resource that aimed to match and broker museum and cultural heritage collections with academics. This digital resource was created and tested with a small sample group from the museum and Higher Education sectors. The resource is still in its development phase and hosted (not publically) by Share Academy.

As part of the MUPI MRF funding, MUPI want to establish whether such a resource would be valuable to the museum and Higher Education sectors; and how this can be delivered and developed. In order to do this, MUPI commissioned an independent museums consultant, Laura Crossley, to carry out research that would enable them to gain a better understanding of the current digital landscape for museum collections and academic networks, and to explore whether those working in the Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage sectors feel there is a need for the proposed resource and whether they would value such a resource.

During the course of the research, Laura conducted desk-based research to explore existing networks and an online survey and focus group to explore the views of those working in the Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage sectors. In addition, Laura interviewed Kevin Gosling, CEO of The Collections Trust, to explore a potential partnership between MUPI and Culture Grid to support the development of the online resource.

The research suggests that those working in the HE and cultural heritage/museum sectors feel there is a need for the proposed digital resource and would value such a resource.

- The research found 189 online networks in total; 140 are primarily aimed at museum professionals and 49 are primarily aimed at Higher Education professionals, but the majority include professionals working in both sectors. This suggests there are many opportunities for museum/cultural heritage professionals to network online and suggests that those working in the museum/cultural heritage and Higher Education sectors value online networks. None of these networks appears to perform all of the same functions as the proposed MUPI digital resource - i.e. highlighting collections, research and expertise; connecting people; helping to broker partnerships - therefore, it seems there is a gap in the market for the proposed resource. In addition, many existing networks are focused on specific topics or specialisms, which means they have a niche appeal. The broad network that MUPI is proposing would offer something different than what is offered by these niche networks.

- Those who belong to networks value opportunities such as networking, sharing, generating projects, and supporting academic research, all of which would be facilitated by the proposed MUPI resource.

- The majority of respondents felt they would use the proposed resource. The resource would have a number of benefits for those working in both sectors, including supporting and enabling academic research, building connections between people and organisations,
brokering partnerships and supporting collaboration, highlighting collections and research, and raising the profile of cultural heritage organisations and their collections.

- Although physical networks are considered to be the most effective form of networking, digital networks are felt to be a good way in which to meet people and network nationally. In addition, digital networks are considered to be less of a time investment than physical networks, which is beneficial to those who lack time and capacity.

**Recommendations for the resource:**

If the committee decides to pursue the resource further (which this report would recommend), the following should be taken into account:

- The preference was for a multi-functional resource that enables users to perform a range of tasks, including:
  - identifying potential museum/cultural heritage partners
  - highlighting museum/collection research agendas/potential
  - highlighting museum collections
  - highlighting archival material
  - searching for relevant academic specialisms
  - identifying relevant archival material
  - identifying relevant university departments/facilities
  - identifying relevant museum collections
  - searching for museum sector expertise
  - searching for previous museum/university partnership projects,
  - highlighting museum workforce expertise
  - locating museum/cultural heritage organisations; and
  - supporting academics to work with museum/cultural heritage education and outreach teams.

- An interactive resource that enables users to connect and share ideas and expertise, and start conversations, would be preferable. The resource should also be accessible and user-friendly.

- MUPI will need to consider how to maintain and promote the resource in order to keep users interested and engaged.

- The resource should be aimed at both the Higher Education (including students) and museum/cultural heritage sectors.

- If possible, the digital resource should be complemented by physical meet-ups, for example, regional conferences and events.

- The opportunity to partner with Culture Grid is a great opportunity that should be pursued further. This report recommends that the MUPI committee have conversations with Kevin Gosling (The Collections Trust) to explore the potential for partnership in more detail. The committee might also consider putting resource into creating user scenarios for how the MUPI resource would use the back-end of Culture Grid, which The Collections Trust can use to advocate to DCMS.
1.0 Introduction

The Museum and University Partnership Initiative (MUPI) is an Arts Council England’s Museum Resilience Fund project to maximise the potential for museums and universities to work together to mutually beneficial aims. Led by NCCPE and developed in partnership with Paddy McNulty Associates and Share Academy project, this project builds on a successful pilot project which was completed earlier this year.

The pilot project demonstrated how the Higher Education sector can be opened up to smaller and medium sized museums whose unique collections and engagement expertise are often an under utilised resource within the Higher Education sector, whilst at the same time adding value to the work of the museums involved and contributing to their long-term resilience.

One of the major challenges faced in developing museum and university partnerships is the lack of knowledge of the breadth and scope of the museum sector and its collections. Often partnerships are developed with larger museums, or continue on the basis of familiarity.

Between 2015 and 2016 NCCPE MUPI partner, Share Academy, developed a digital resource that aimed to match and broker museum and cultural heritage collections with academics. This digital resource was created and tested with a small sample group from the museum and Higher Education sectors. The resource is still in its development phase and hosted (not publically) by Share Academy.

As part of the MUPI MRF funding, MUPI want to establish whether such a digital resource would be valuable to the museum and Higher Education sectors; and how this can be delivered and developed. In order to do this, MUPI commissioned an independent museums consultant, Laura Crossley, to carry out research that would enable them to gain a better understanding of the current digital landscape for museum collections and academic networks, primarily focusing on local, regional, or national networks.

1.1 Project tasks

The project tasks are as follows:

- Establish the number, range, membership, activity, and scope/format of online museum networks in England (UK if appropriate).
- Establish the number, range, membership, activity, and scope/format of online academic networks in England (UK if appropriate) that focus on museums, collections, museology, cultural heritage practice, academic/cultural heritage partnerships, and research partnerships. These may include networks that are university specific, HE group led, Research Council initiatives, or owned by for profit companies (e.g. LinkedIn and Academia.edu).
- Investigate with museum and HE stakeholders whether a museum/cultural heritage collections and research aims ‘portal’ is considered a need, or of value to the a) museum sector and b) HE sector.
- Liaise with cultural heritage/museum sector data aggregators and developers – i.e. The Collections Trust, Culture 24 – on the viability of integration of data to/from the digital resource.
- Produce costed options for the hosting and development of the resource over a 1 to 3 year period.
- Contribute to the digital resource theme within the wider MUPI project.
1.2 Project outputs and outcomes

**Outputs**

- A short internal report with the findings of the research that includes recommendations for the further development of the Share Academy digital resource.
- A presentation on the interim findings at the MUPI symposium in November 2017.

**Outcomes**

- MUPI will have a greater understanding and knowledge of range, number, and activity of online museum and academic networking / information platforms.
- MUPI will have a greater understanding of need of museum / HE networks / information platforms.
- MUPI will have a greater understanding of potential partnerships with other museum/cultural heritage data aggregators / information websites.
- MUPI will have an estimated cost of hosting an online resource for the next 3 years.
- The results of this project will help MUPI decide whether to pursue a more ‘active’ online brokering site or to develop a more static museum focused ‘shop-window’ site aimed at academics.

2.0 Methodology

The research included desk-based research, an online survey, a focus group, and an interview.

2.1 Desk-based research

In October 2017, Laura undertook desk-based research in order to explore the current digital landscape for museum collections and academic networks, primarily focusing on local, regional, or national networks. This research aimed to enable MUPI to gain a greater understanding and knowledge of the range, number, and activity of online museum and academic networking / information platforms.

2.2 Online survey

Laura used SurveyMonkey to create an online survey for both museum/cultural heritage and Higher Education professionals. The survey explored:

- Membership of museum/cultural heritage and HE networks
- Whether respondents are active within these networks and, if so, what motivates them to be actively involved.
- Views on the effectiveness of different types of physical and digital networks.
- The extent to which respondents engage with different types of networks.
- The extent to which respondents are likely to use a digital resource that helps academics discover cultural heritage collections, museums, and cultural heritage sector expertise.
- Views on what the digital resource might enable users to do.
- Views on the format of the digital resource.
The survey was promoted via relevant JISCMAIL lists and Facebook groups and Twitter and was sent to personal contacts.

2.3 Focus group

At the MUPI symposium on 2 November, Laura presented the interim findings from phase one of the project and, together with Paddy, delivered an interactive focus group for delegates, which enabled further exploration of the issues.

2.4 Interview with Kevin Gosling

Laura interviewed Kevin Gosling, CEO of The Collections Trust, to explore the viability of integration of data to/from the digital resource and help MUPI gain a greater understanding of potential partnerships with other museum/cultural heritage data aggregators/information websites. Laura also contacted Culture24 to try to explore similar issues but, following an initial response from Laura’s contact, the organisation’s CEO and senior leadership team did not respond to the request.

3.0 Research findings

The findings are based on the desk-based research, online survey, focus group, and interview with Kevin Gosling. A spreadsheet listing the online networks that were uncovered by the desk research and online survey has been provided separately.

3.1 Desk-based research

The desk-based research explored the current digital landscape for museum collections and academic networks, primarily focusing on local, regional, or national networks.

3.1.1 Online cultural heritage networks

The desk research uncovered 130 online cultural heritage networks that cover a wide-range of topics, including arts management, education/learning, engagement and participation, and specialist collections and interests. A further 10 networks were highlighted by survey respondents. Twenty-three of these networks are regional; the rest national and even international.

JISCMAIL networks make up just under half of the total number of networks, with 62 of the groups being in this category. Thirty-four networks are ACE Subject Specialist Networks; these vary greatly from being simple, static websites to featuring tools that enable members to connect or support users to locate specific collections. Social media networks are prevalent; there are 23 Facebook groups – 13 of which are groups belonging to Subject Specialist Networks - and 8 LinkedIn groups.

The JISCMAIL networks, by their nature, only allow for online discussion between members. Some, such as the GEM network and Museums Computer Group network, are very active, with members posting messages daily. Others, such as the Museums Association regional groups, appear to be inactive.

Twenty-one of the Subject Specialist Networks have static websites, although two of these – the Fire Heritage Network and the Association of Performing Art Collections (APAC) – feature lists of members. The Chinese Collections Group has a Yahoo discussion group rather than a static website and the
Musical Instruments Resource Network features a forum for members. As stated earlier, 13 of the Networks have their own Facebook groups which also enable discussion between members. Searchable collections databases are featured on the Islamic Art and Material Culture Network, Money and Medals, the Social History Curators Group, the Sport in Museums Network, and the Understanding Portraits Network. The Rural Museums Network website features some resources that support the identification of rural heritage collections in the UK and the Society for Museum Archaeology website includes an interactive map that enables individuals to access details of organisations that are accepting archaeological archives and which indicates areas that do not currently have a repository archive. The Money and Medals and Understanding British Portraits websites include searchable expertise databases.

The majority of the groups, with the small exception of networks that are solely aimed at museum professionals, such as those for Emerging Museum Professionals, are used by both museum/cultural heritage and Higher Education professionals, thus enabling discussion between staff working in both sectors.

### 3.1.2 Online academic networks that focus on museums and cultural heritage

The desk research uncovered 46 online academic networks that focus on museums and cultural heritage. A further 3 networks were highlighted by survey respondents. Like the museum networks, these networks cover a wide-range of topics, including many networks that discuss specialist interests and collections and a small number that have a broader membership, such as the Association of Critical Heritage Studies networks. Four networks are regional; the rest national and international.

Seventeen of the networks are JISCMAIL networks and 12 are special interest networks that have their own online presence. Only 7 networks are Facebook groups and 2 are LinkedIn groups. These networks are much less likely than museum networks to have additional Facebook groups for members.

Ten of the networks have a static online presence that does not allow for interaction between members, although some, including Archaeology-Heritage-Art and Cultural Participation Research Network, have Twitter pages that enable discussion and interaction. Other networks include searchable databases of members (Drawing Research Network, Digital Cultural Heritage Research Network, Museums and Galleries History Group) and discussion groups (Early Modern Dress and Textiles Network, Connected Communities Heritage Network, The Inclusive Museum Research Network, The Arts in Society Research Network).

The majority of the groups, with the small exception of networks that are solely aimed at academics, such the Boundary Objects Network, are used by both Higher Education and museum/cultural professionals.

### 3.2 Online survey

An online survey for both museum/cultural heritage and Higher Education professionals explored topics such as membership of museum/cultural heritage and HE networks, views on types of networks, and views on the proposed digital resource.

#### 3.2.1 About the respondents

Eighty-seven people responded to the survey. Respondents represented a fairly wide geographic spread:
The respondents who responded to this question were almost evenly spread across Higher Education institutions (44 people) and cultural heritage sector organisations (43 people). One person skipped the question. Of the people who work in the cultural heritage sector, the majority are based in Independent Museums (15 people), Archives (11 people), and Local Authority Museums/Services (10 people), with a small number (fewer than 5) working in National Museums, Historic Houses, Independent former Local Authority Museums, Museum Development, University Museums, Charities with collections, National Trust/National Trust for Scotland, an Archaeological Trust, National Gallery, and a heritage learning organisation.

Of the respondents who work in the cultural heritage sector, the majority work in Learning/Outreach (12 people) or Curatorial roles (7 people), or are Directors/Managers (9 people). Fewer than 5 people work in Collections, Development, Senior Leadership, Research and Digital roles or work across departments/are a lone worker.

The respondents who work in Higher Education institutions work in a variety of research roles – Senior Lecturer (8 people), Research Fellow (4 people), PhD researcher (4 people), Lecturer (2 people), Research Associate (2 people), Professor/Chair (1 person) and Research Assistant (1 person). Five work in Engagement/Outreach and three work in other roles – Placements Officer, Doctoral Training Partnerships Manager, and Impact Manager.

### 3.2.2 Network membership

Nearly half of respondents (21 people) who work in the cultural heritage sector belong to formal or informal museum/cultural heritage and university networks, and 15 do not belong to such networks. Four people said they were not sure whether they belong to these networks and others skipped the question. Of those who belong to networks, 11 are active in all their networks, 7 are active in some of them, and others are not active in any of their networks. Those who are active in networks said they are motivated to take this active role for the following reasons:

- Keeping up-to-date with developments in my field/learning about sector news (5 people)
- Networking (5 people)
- Sharing ideas, advice, issues, challenges and solutions (3 people)
- Opportunities for training (3 people)
- Overall professional development (3 people)
• Opportunities to gain funding for projects (3 people)
• Interest in activities of the network (2 people)
• Opportunities for attending conferences (2 people)
• Improving links with educational institutions
• Improving links with local communities
• Raising the profile of our collection and our museum
• Encouraging others to use our collection
• Online network is easy to navigate
• Developing partnerships is part of my role
• Improving services
• Sharing subject specialist information
• Opportunities for collaboration and partnership working
• Finding out about job opportunities
• Opportunity to change things and make things happen

One person said that they are not active in one of the networks they belong to because meetings happen in evening and are difficult to attend because of home responsibilities.

Just over half of respondents (24 people) who work in Higher Education institutions belong to formal or informal HE and museum/cultural heritage networks, 12 do not belong to such networks, and 2 did not know whether they belong to networks. Others skipped the question. Of the respondents who belong to networks, 16 are active in all of them, 7 are active in some of them, and 1 is not active in any of their networks. Those who are active in networks said they are motivated to take this active role for the following reasons:

• Support academic research (7 people)
• Networking opportunities (4 people)
• Generate new projects (3 people)
• Contractual commitments (2 people)
• Build CV / career development (2 people)
• Share insights and ideas (2 people)
• Community engagement (2 people)
• The other people involved in the network
• Peer support
• Keeps me connected with what’s happening
• Boost academic profile
• Promote research activities
• Explore and develop partnerships
• Develop potential for impact
• Develop interdisciplinary understanding of heritage/research collaborations
• Ask questions of others
• Create connections which might lead to work-related learning opportunities for students
• Community development; developing the cultural provision in my region
• Taking part in decision-making

The majority of museum/cultural heritage and university networks that respondents belong to are local groups that meet in-person, including learning groups, archaeological and prehistory groups, local heritage and historic forums, knowledge quarters, and project working groups. These groups tend to
meet a number of times a year to provide updates and share knowledge.

The more formal, national (or international) networks that respondents belong to are:

- Group for Education in Museums
- Museums Association
- Association for Independent Museums
- Association for Cultural Enterprises
- National Alliance for Museums Health and Wellbeing
- Museums and Participation Network
- UK Registrars Group (UKRG)
- University Museum Group
- Subject Specialist Networks
- Digital Culture Heritage Research Network
- Voices of War and Peace
- Historic Libraries Forum
- Museum Ethnographers Group
- Heritage Values Network
- Association of Critical Heritage Studies
- The Archives and Records Association
- Engage

3.2.3 Views on forms of networking

Respondents were asked to tell us what form of networking they feel is the most effective by rating each choice from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least effective and 5 being the most effective.

Physical networks were felt to be the most effective networks, with an average score of 4.29. Email-only networks were felt to be the least effective, with an average score of 2.82. Other networks received the following average scores:

- Local networks (city/county): 3.99
- Regional networks: 3.86
- Formal networks: 3.55
- Informal networks: 3.46
- National networks: 3.29
- Digital-only networks: 2.82

The ratings which were given are perhaps unsurprising, given that respondents are most likely to belong physical, local networks and value the face-to-face networking and sharing of ideas that are provided by such networks. It should be noted, however, that several respondents felt that different types of network are effective for different purposes, for example, digital networks are a useful way to connect people across the country.

There was a strong preference amongst respondents for networks that offer a combination of digital and face-to-face networking. Digital was felt to be a good way to reach a wide-range of people across the country. Network-hosted local or regional physical meetings then provide opportunities to meet face-to-face, which respondents felt was key to building rich partnerships. One person said that funding might support smaller organisations to attend these physical meetings.
The main concern that respondents voiced regarding digital-only networks is that they felt such networks often depend on work and enthusiasm of a few people, and it is easy to ignore digital networks when workloads are heavy.

3.2.4 Likelihood to engage with different types of network

Respondents were asked which form of network they are realistically likely to engage with, given time, cost and capacity limitations by rating each choice from 1 to 5, with 1 being least likely to engage with and 5 being most likely to engage with. Responses broadly mirrored the answers provided about the effectiveness of each type of network. They are listed below with their average score:

- Local networks: 3.93
- Physical networks: 3.69
- Regional networks: 3.67
- Informal networks: 3.45
- Formal networks: 3.35
- National networks: 3.24
- Digital-only networks: 3.18
- Email-only networks: 3.1

The fuller responses people gave to this question provided a more nuanced picture. Respondents strongly felt that engaging in networks has to be worth the time investment and, although physical meetings are a useful way to meet people and share ideas – both of which are important to people –, it is important to be careful to not commit to too many physical meetings, and can be hard to find the time to attend meetings. One person also noted that physical meetings need to be well-organised and provide opportunities to meet and discuss; they went onto say that the MUPI events they have attended were excellent.

Digital networks were felt to be a good way to find out information and engaging with them does not take the same amount of time as physical networks, however, respondents felt that digital networks need to be dynamic and provide reasons for members to keep engaging.

Respondents also said that it is sometimes easier to justify time spent engaging with national networks, and that these networks are a good way to find out best practice from around the country.

3.2.5 Likelihood to engage with the proposed digital resource

Respondents told us how likely they would be, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very unlikely and 5 is very likely, to use a digital resource that helps academics discover cultural heritage collections, museums, and cultural heritage sector expertise. Responses strongly suggest that the proposed resource was of interest to respondents and that they would be willing to engage with it. Of the 72 people who responded to this question,

- 25 answered ‘4’
- 23 answered ‘5’
- 17 answered ‘3’
- 6 answered ‘2’; and
- 1 answered ‘1’
The average response was 3.88.

Respondents gave a range of reasons as to why they would engage with the proposed resource:

**Higher Education sector respondents**
- Would save time, effort and money in scoping out, and researching, collections (4 people)
- Useful for research (3 people)
- Extend networks and build connections (2 people)
- Useful for teaching
- Would provide contact information of museum staff that can be difficult to find out, particularly those working in non-national museums
- Useful for students
- Access cultural heritage and expertise
- Sounds like a straightforward and useful tool

**Cultural heritage sector respondents**
- Highlight/provide digital access to our collections (5 people)
- Increase our connections with academics (3 people)
- Increase our national and international reach / raise our profile (2 people)
- Potential for collaboration and partnerships (2 people)
- Encourage academics to research our collections (2 people)
- Collections-based resource can help demonstrate their worth to senior management team, trustees and the council
- Highlight our research priorities
- Support personal CPD by working with universities

Reasons given for why people might not engage with the resource were as follows:
- Our catalogue is already online so academics should already be able to find what they need
- It depends whether the content is relevant to our day-to-day business
- It sounds like a lot of effort to create digital resources for a very small academic audience
- It would depend on content and variety
- Digital lacks the immediacy of face-to-face
- I’m not sure how this is different to something like Culture24 or Museum Crush
- It depends on how easy to use and heavy handed it is
- Time limitations

**3.2.6 Functions of the digital resource**

Respondents were asked what they might use the proposed digital resource to do. Answers were as follows:
• Identify potential museum/cultural heritage partners: 48 people
• Highlight museum/collection research agendas/potential: 47
• Highlight museum collections: 35
• Highlight archive material held by your organisation: 35
• Search for relevant academic specialisms: 34
• Identify relevant archival material: 33
• Identify relevant university departments/facilities: 33
• Identify relevant museum collections: 32
• Search for museum sector expertise: 27
• Search for previous museum/university partnership projects: 27
• Highlight museum workforce expertise: 26
• Locate museums/cultural heritage organisations: 25
• Locate Higher Education institutions: 12

Identifying potential partners and highlighting collection research agendas were felt to be particularly important functions but it is clear that the preference is for a multi-functional resource that enables users to find/highlight collections and research agendas, find partners, search for relevant people and materials, find specific expertise, and find departments.

Other responses were:

• Teaching
• Display my project in some way e.g. link to it
• Finding an expert on X or someone who could help us research Y
• Tell people about what we do
• Seek conservation expertise for areas of our collection which we do not have a specialist for
• Advertise internships
• Placements. There are so many students out there needing placements as part of their courses. This would be a brilliant place to talk about those sorts of opportunities
• Access to joint funding bids
• Sharing best practice
• Learning about relevant current funding schemes
• Research on education and the museum/gallery sector and possibilities in courses and funding to further my career
• Help with funding bids
• Feeding back academic users’ experience of using archives to improve/shape/deliver and have greater involvement in each other’s agendas
• Provide access to collections in digital format (i.e. sources that have been digitised for online study)
• Knowledge sharing
• Information about how museums work: what constraints they are under, how exhibitions are planned etc. The default position with many people is to approach museums because they want to do an exhibition, which is almost never realistic and it would be useful to have some kind of FAQs perhaps to try and mitigate this
• Engagement and participation e.g. questions posed on Twitter etc
• Explore museum research interests/potentials/agendas.
• Propose ideas and ask if anyone was interested (because interests are not always declared)
• Enable students to contact museums for research purposes
• Support museums and universities to partner to support learning and public engagement e.g. searches to identify opportunities for students to use and support the museum as part of their course (e.g. access to collections and learning sessions/gaining work experience/learning through teaching to the public), or opportunities to showcase what universities do by using the museum as a public face, or to work directly with members of the public by co-creating learning programmes.

3.2.7 Format of the digital resource

Respondents were asked for their views on the format of the proposed resource. Thirty-six respondents preferred the idea of an interactive resource, 22 had no preference, and 11 preferred a static resource. Respondents who gave fuller answers to this question strongly felt that an interactive resource would be more beneficial in enabling people to connect and share ideas and expertise. A resource that can be used to start conversations would save time and make it easier to connect with others. Some respondents voiced concern that a static resource could look old-fashioned and may quickly go out of date.

3.2.8 Target audience of the digital resource

Respondents were asked who the proposed digital resource should be primarily aimed at. All but one of the 71 people who answered this question felt that it should be aimed at both HE and museum/cultural heritage sector staff. (The other respondent felt it should be primarily aimed at museum/cultural heritage sector staff). Respondents felt that, if the resource is to bring the Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage sector together and create two-way dialogues, it must be aimed at people working in both sectors. A resource aimed at both audiences is better able to produce partnerships. One person felt that the resource needs to be free of sector-specific jargon to support accessibility.

3.2.9 Other comments on the digital resource

Respondents were given the opportunity to share any other comments they had about the digital resource. Answers were as follows:

Positive responses:
• Sounds like a good idea
• An ability for museums/cultural organisations to flag up collections they particularly want academics to engage with would be advantageous
• I think it is an important and positive idea and could be something HLF could be interested in
• Great idea – I’d be keen on using and directing those I work with in that direction
• Sounds like a great idea!
• Higher Education staff have a tendency to overlook what the heritage sector needs and wants – we are often quite guilty of seeing it only in terms of how they can help our research – and this is a problem that needs to be addressed collectively.

Potential difficulties/issues:
• Who will maintain it?
• Will there be copyright issues?
• Difficulties of keeping the resource up-to-date
Partnerships happen more where money is available. I’ve been involved in a few and am currently working with two universities, but resources are important and stretched for everyone, despite the great benefits.

**Suggestions about the digital resource:**
- It needs to be user-friendly (i.e. people can add/change information easily) and be more about content than style
- Have something that you can log into without creating yet another login i.e. that uses an existing Google account
- Would it be better on a platform that already exists rather than reinventing the wheel and creating something new?
- Pilot something with interested partners
- If you were able to at least have an annual meeting, or possibly a couple of regional meetings that went with it, that would strengthen the resource in my view.

### 3.2.10 Views on future MUPI support

As an additional question, respondents were asked how they feel MUPI could support the development of museum/cultural heritage and university networks (whether digital or physical) in the future. Answers were as follows:

**Events**
- Conferences/events
- MUPI-match type events – 12 people said this
- Continue with physical meetings
- Impact case study development sessions/information
- Support for initial physical meetings which showcase the digital resource and get some buy in for this.
- Local informal meet ups run regionally (Museums do this well in some places but it could be piggy backed on existing activity, perhaps hosted at cultural organisations - if there were some initial funding to help this, refreshments even, that might help the first meetings.)
- Provide suggestions for themes or resources for more formal meetings.

On the subject of events, one person said, “I wanted to come to one of your networking events but my application was rejected. I think the event is relevant to my work but perhaps I am misunderstanding the objectives of MUPI, therefore it would be good to provide clarification when an application to an event is rejected.”

**Funding-related activities e.g. providing funding, providing support, lobbying**
- Funding for activities and events
- Availability of small facilitation grants
- Grants are very helpful
- Funding
- The fight for funding seems to be a problem. Small collaborations are not funded because museums have large scale projects that take precedence.
- Lobby the research councils (AHRC/ESRC) to enable (non-national/university) museums to be able to apply directly for grants and/or set up new grant schemes dedicated to supporting research activities in such museums.
• Support fundraising by helping identify sources of funds, support applications, introductions to managers of trusts and funds, potential partnership link-up opportunities
• Helping co-ordinate funding bids

Funding PhD studentships and postdocs
• By offering joint university/museum PhD studentships that could be bid for on a competitive basis. And/or to offer small pots of money (e.g. up to £10,000) to allow people to develop partnerships. However, I think that the PhD funds would be better!
• Developing meaningful relationships of this sort takes time. Early career researchers are often more inclined to engage with museums and public engagement agendas, but these activities have to be squeezed in among other expectations and responsibilities in research and teaching. The precarious nature of employment at early career stage is a further impediment to developing relationships and participating in these kinds of networks. There is a wealth of expertise and willingness amongst postdocs and ECRs to pursue partnerships and collaborative projects. But sustainability will always be an issue as long as the postdoctoral jobs market runs on the expectation that researchers will hold part-time and/or fixed-term roles, often at different institutions all over the country, over a number of years. Offering paid MUPI fellowships at postdoctoral level would be a considerable step towards developing MUP agendas and practice. It also makes sense for researchers at this level to have this opportunity, given that staff in permanent posts, and at more senior levels, have significant demands on their time and are often unable/unwilling to engage with engagement initiatives.

Digital solutions
• Web platform would be nice with a link to JISCMAIL to remind people of its presence/evolution
• Some kind of blog would be good for info sharing - day in the life type things perhaps

Connect groups, individuals and networks
• Connect regional and national groups
• Find all the public development staff in universities – such a great resource nobody knew existed. It’s knowing how to get that relationship started that’s the hardest bit.
• Link networks together
• Link people to specialties and collections
• Linking up interested academics with relevant institutions and museum workers
• Is there scope for involving academics in the museum Subject Specialist Networks? Are there similar networks in academia that museums could be involved in?
• Build thematic networks e.g. networks that bring together academics working on gender with heritage organisations that house topical collections e.g. The East End Women’s Museum

Marketing/profile raising activities
• I think I’d attach to an existing organisation like AIM or the MA and have a section on their website and in their bulletins. It helps to maximise people’s limited travel budgets if you had a presence at their conferences. (That said, the MA conference is unaffordable for most museums.)
• Use other networks to raise awareness e.g. GEM, MA, AIM etc.
• Run a comprehensive marketing campaign to encourage museums to take part
• Could be an add on to the Engage conference.

Best practice models
• It might be worth talking to Group for Education in Museums. They have volunteer admins, regional meetings and an online forum so could be similar in set up?
• I think that the York Country House Partnership and Thames Valley Country House Partnership, a knowledge exchange between York University and Oxford University, is proving to be a good model.

Decreasing barriers to partnership working

• Help us sort out the politics of university and council copyrights so that we can share information easily!
• The main challenge I have found with working across museum and HE sectors is the lack of time available to curatorial staff in particular. I am not sure how MUPI can support this, unless they have funding for specific posts to work between museums and HE (and even then the problem of lack of funding for curatorial staff would not be solved). I don’t mean to be dismissive by saying this; I’ve found that curatorial staff are very keen to work with HE - but that they simply lack capacity to do so.

Other

• Regional leads feeding back to a national agenda
• Central training
• Information about how students can get jobs in the sector
• Highlight successful projects
• Local brokers to mobilise people and liaise with relevant contacts perhaps

One person said, "If MUPI led in this area then this this could become a vibrant and exciting network bringing organisations of many different scales together from small volunteer museums, large museum and large learning organisations together."

3.3 Focus group

At the MUPI symposium on 2 November, Laura presented the interim findings from phase one of the project and, together with Paddy, delivered an interactive focus group for nine participants, who worked in both the cultural heritage and Higher Education sectors, which enabled further exploration of the issues.

3.3.1 Participation in other networks

Participants belonged to formal, local, national and international networks. One person, who works in HE, said that they do not belong to any networks and this means that, even within the same school in the university, no one knows who is doing what.

3.3.2 Likelihood to engage with digital networks

Participants said that they are realistically likely to engage with digital and physical networks. Digital networks were particularly popular. Benefits of digital networks were particularly felt to be:

• Supporting Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage professionals to meet; they do not always attend the same events and sometimes work in silos.
• Time limitations mean that it can be difficult to attend physical meetings.

• Supporting the brokering of long-term partnerships.

However, they felt that digital networks are improved if they also lead to face-to-face meet-ups. Comments included:

• “Digital networks need to be a catalyst for physical meetings.”

• “Physical meetings mean you can thrash things out."

• One person, who works in Higher Education, noted that, “funders tend to like physical meetings.”

For digital networks to work well, participants felt that they need to be user-friendly. Such networks also need to be advertised widely to Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage professionals.

3.3.3 Views on the proposed digital resource

Participants were very enthusiastic about the idea of the proposed MUPI digital resource. They felt that the benefits of such a platform would be:

• Providing a platform where Higher Education and cultural heritage workers can meet would help to improve people’s knowledge of the sector they do not work in. For example, it was noted that those in the cultural heritage sector often do not know about the existence of public engagement staff who work in Higher Education institutions with whom they might be able to broker partnerships.

• Connecting academics to collections, knowledge and expertise, and connecting cultural heritage professionals to knowledge and expertise. Participants felt that the digital resource should help professionals from both sectors to find each other and make connections by providing information about people and organisations.

• Increasing knowledge about museums’ collections (participants felt there is “lots of misinterpretation about what museums have”) and academics’ research interests.

• Increasing academics’ knowledge about opportunities for working with museum education and outreach teams that can contribute to impact and REF e.g. academics could deliver sessions in museums.

• Connecting students and cultural heritage institutions, which could support student employability (e.g. through work experience or placements) and help cultural heritage institutions increase their 18-24 audience.

1 Participants strongly felt that MUPI should better utilise Higher Education Public Engagement workers who have strong connections with academics and can point them in the direction of museums with collections that are relevant to their interests.
• Potentially signposting Higher Education and cultural heritage professionals to other networks they can join, such as those featured on the spreadsheet that was created as part of this report.

• Providing examples of partnership projects to support people’s understanding of what their potential future partnerships might look like and to demonstrate that effective collaboration between cultural heritage organisations and HE institutions is possible.

For the resource to be as beneficial and wide-reaching as possible, participants felt it needs to be accessible, innovative, unique and interactive. Two people felt that the digital resource should send people notifications when potential partners, particularly those with similar interests, are added to the resource.

Participants strongly felt that the proposed resource should not ‘reinvent the wheel’ and, therefore, should utilise nationally aggregated data rather than creating data from scratch.

Participants were asked how the digital resource might be funded; ACE and RCUK were both offered as suggestions.

Participants felt that the resource has the potential to link with other professionals and sectors, namely, arts (and artists), archives, science and social sciences. One person felt the resource could link with existing networks. Another said, “Links with other sectors are crucial – explore and exploit multidisciplinary nature of museum collections for original work, making it easier to attract funding etc. Share good practice.”

3.4 Interview with Kevin Gosling

Laura interviewed Kevin Gosling, CEO of The Collections Trust, to explore the viability of integration of data to/from the digital resource and help MUPI gain a greater understanding of potential partnerships with other museum/cultural heritage data aggregators/information websites. Please note, the information provided by Kevin is only to be shared internally with the MUPI committee.

Through Culture Grid\(^2\), The Collections Trust brings together data about collections from different museums. Culture Grid is a searchable database of hundreds of cultural heritage collections in the UK that contains approximately 3 million items. Cultural heritage professionals can upload information about their collections onto the site.

Culture Grid is an important bit of infrastructure; the back-end of Culture Grid works well and has the capability to sit in the background of websites, enabling other websites to include a function that supports visitors to search collections. Indeed, this is currently used by the University Museums in Scotland (UMIS) group to enable people to search their collections via the UMIS website\(^3\). This is enabled by the fact that the back-end of the UMIS website is Culture Grid.

Culture Grid has not been funded for 7 years and is currently totally unsupported apart from an investment of £1000 by The Collections Trust for the server hosting.

\(^2\) http://www.culturegrid.org.uk
\(^3\) http://www.revealing.umis.ac.uk
In light of the forthcoming DCMS *Culture is Digital* paper, The Collections Trust has been lobbying to DCMS for one of the national museums and galleries to take over the back-end of Culture Grid because, as a small charity, the Trust does not feel they are the right body to take this on. The Collections Trust would like to take the core functionality of Culture Grid and transfer this to an organisation that is going to be around for decades. This represents a common sense, strategic approach that would support a range of outcomes that ACE and DCMS want to achieve.

Currently, The Collections Trust have found a national institution that is keen to take Culture Grid on but DCMS need to agree that this role becomes part of the core work of the institution so that this is reflected in their future funding settlements. Although DCMS accepts the principle that Culture Grid a core bit of infrastructure that brings together data from museums that other organisations could use to digitally showcase collections, transferring Culture Grid to the national institution may or may not happen.

In Kevin’s view, there is a slight danger that the sector will go backwards as people who are using Culture Grid are going back to swapping CSE files and there is a real need for programme-funded bit of infrastructure to ensure that Culture Grid will be around for years to come. Another issue is that because the future of Culture Grid is uncertain, future planning is a little difficult. UMIS, for example, think they could get Higher Education funding to help develop their site, and they are keen to do this, but they are concerned about relying on Culture Grid if it may not be here in the future.

If the future of Culture Grid is secured, Kevin feels that there might be work to be done to refine it. This might include, for example, a password protected part of the site where people can play with their data before it goes live.

Following the recent Mendoza review, which includes, for example, recommendations for increased lending between institutions and collections growth, both of which are made easier when people share collections data, ACE, DCMS and HLF shall get together and come up with an action plan. The Collections Trust would like to get their plans for Culture Grid into this action plan.

From the point of view of The Collections Trust, the more organisations that say they have a need for the data that Culture Grid provides would be very welcome in helping to demonstrate a demand for the infrastructure and function that is provided by Culture Grid. The Trust needs organisations to provide potential user scenarios for how each organisation might use the back-end of Culture Grid as they can use this information to advocate to DCMS.

If MUPI chose to partner with Culture Grid (if this is possible in the future), there would be no cost to MUPI. The principle of Culture Grid is that people share their data and then it is available for free through an API.

### 4.0 Findings and recommendations

The research suggests that those working in the HE and cultural heritage/museum sectors feel there is a need for the proposed digital resource and would value such a resource.

- The research found 189 online networks in total; 140 are primarily aimed at museum professionals and 49 are primarily aimed at Higher Education professionals, but the majority include professionals working in both sectors. This suggests there are many opportunities for
museum/cultural heritage professionals to network online and suggests that those working in the museum/cultural heritage and Higher Education sectors value online networks. None of these networks appears to perform all of the same functions as the proposed MUPI digital resource i.e. highlighting collections, research and expertise; connecting people; helping to broker partnerships, therefore, it seems there is a gap in the market for the proposed resource. In addition, many existing networks are focused on specific topics or specialisms, which means they have a niche appeal. The broad network that MUPI is proposing would offer something different than what is offered by these niche networks.

- Those who belong to networks value opportunities such as networking, sharing, generating projects, and supporting academic research, all of which would be facilitated by the proposed MUPI resource.

- The majority of respondents felt they would use the proposed resource. The resource would have a number of benefits for those working in both sectors, including supporting and enabling academic research, building connections between people and organisations, brokering partnerships and supporting collaboration, highlighting collections and research, and raising the profile of cultural heritage organisations and their collections.

- Although physical networks are considered to be the most effective form of networking, digital networks are felt to be a good way in which to meet people and network nationally. In addition, digital networks are considered to be less of a time investment than physical networks, which is beneficial to those who lack time and capacity.

Recommendations for the resource:

If the committee decides to pursue the resource further (which this report would recommend), the following should be taken into account:

- The preference was for a multi-functional resource that enables users to perform a range of tasks, including:
  - identifying potential museum/cultural heritage partners
  - highlighting museum/collection research agendas/potential
  - highlighting museum collections
  - highlighting archival material
  - searching for relevant academic specialisms
  - identifying relevant archival material
  - identifying relevant university departments/facilities
  - identifying relevant museum collections
  - searching for museum sector expertise
  - searching for previous museum/university partnership projects,
  - highlighting museum workforce expertise
  - locating museum/cultural heritage organisations; and
  - supporting academics to work with museum/cultural heritage education and outreach teams.

- An interactive resource that enables users to connect and share ideas and expertise, and start conversations, would be preferable. The resource should also be accessible and user-friendly.
• MUPI will need to consider how to maintain and promote the resource in order to keep users interested and engaged.

• The resource should be aimed at both the Higher Education (including students) and museum/cultural heritage sectors.

• If possible, the digital resource should be complemented by physical meet-ups, for example, regional conferences and events.

• The opportunity to partner with Culture Grid is a great opportunity that should be pursued further. This report recommends that the MUPI committee have conversations with Kevin Gosling to explore the potential for partnership in more detail. The committee might also consider putting resource into creating user scenarios for how the MUPI resource would use the back-end of Culture Grid, which The Collections Trust can use to advocate to DCMS.
5.0 Appendix

5.1 Online survey

Introduction

MUPI is an Arts Council England funded project examining how museum and university partnerships can be developed and supported.

A key element of developing cross sector partnerships is the ability for people and organisations to network with each other, exchange knowledge, and identify ways to work together and partner in the future.

As part of the MUPI project we are exploring what museum/cultural heritage and university networks currently exist; at what level – local, regional, national, or international – these networks work; what these networks do; and in what format – formal/informal, digital/physical, regular/irregular, and so forth.

This survey has been created to help us identify what current activity is already happening - between who and how. We are also looking at how, or if, MUPI can support museum-university networks in the future, and what type of networks museum would be most useful and effective.

All answers are confidential and no personal identifiers will be shared.

The survey will be online until 5pm on Friday 10 November. It should take around 10 minutes to complete.

On completion of the survey, you will be given the opportunity to enter into a prize draw to win a £25 One4All gift card that can be used in over 120 high street and online stores (https://www.one4allgiftcard.co.uk/gift-cards-online).

Thank you.

Complementing this survey, a MUPI funded project – Research Matchmaker – is also exploring the potential for a collections research focused digital network. More information and links to their consultation can be found at the South East Museum Development Programme website - http://bit.ly/2xiSAxA.
**About you**

1. In which region/nation is your organisation based?

- [ ] England: East Midlands
- [ ] England: East of England
- [ ] England: London
- [ ] England: North West
- [ ] England: North East
- [ ] England: South East
- [ ] England: South West
- [ ] Other (please specify)

2. Organisation type. If you work for more than one organisation, please tick all the answers that apply.

- [ ] Higher Education institution
- [ ] Cadw
- [ ] English Heritage
- [ ] Historic House
- [ ] Historic Scotland
- [ ] Independent Museum
- [ ] Independent former Local Authority Museum
- [ ] Local Authority Museum/Service
- [ ] National Museum
- [ ] Historic Environment Division Northern Ireland
- [ ] National Trust / National Trust for Scotland
- [ ] Military Museum
- [ ] Museum Development
- [ ] University Museum

Other (please specify)
### Museum/cultural heritage roles and networks

3. What is your primary role within your organisation?

- Director/manager
- Senior leadership
- Development
- Curatorial
- Collections
- Exhibitions
- Learning/outreach
- Visitor services
- Other (please specify)

![Radio buttons for role selection]

- Research
- Estates
- Operations
- Design
- Marketing and communications
- Digital
- I work across departments / I am a lone worker

![Additional radio button for role selection]

Are you a member of any museum/cultural heritage and university networks?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Please tell us the names of the networks, and write a sentence about each of them (i.e how/when they meet; are they meet in person, online, or both?; are they formal or informal?)

![Text box for network information]
### Museum/cultural heritage networks - active member

Considering the museum/cultural heritage and university networks you listed in the previous question, are you active in all or some of these?

- [ ] Yes, all of them
- [ ] Yes, some of them
- [ ] I am not active in any of these networks

Please tell us what motivates you to be active within these networks.
6. What is your primary role within your organisation?

☐ Lecturer
☐ Senior lecturer
☐ Reader
☐ Professor/Chair
☐ Research Assistant
☐ Research Associate
☐ Research Fellow
☐ Other (please specify)

☐ Teaching position
☐ Post-doc
☐ PhD researcher
☐ Strategic development
☐ Business development
☐ Engagement/outreach

Are you a member of any Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage networks?

These may be formal or informal, local, regional, national, or international networks.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure

Please tell us the names of the networks, and write a sentence about each of them (i.e. how/when they meet; are they meet in person, online, or both; are they formal or informal?)
8. Considering the Higher Education and museum/cultural heritage networks you listed in the previous question, are you active in all or some of these?

☐ Yes, all of them
☐ Yes, some of them
☐ I am not active in any of these networks

Please tell us what motivates you to be active within these networks.
9. What form of networking do you think is most effective? With 1 being least effective and 5 being most effective. Please rate all choices.

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Please tell us more.
10. Thinking about your time, the cost, and your capacity, which form of network are you realistically likely to engage with? With 1 being least likely to engage with and 5 being the very/most likely to engage with. Please rate all choices.

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Formal networks
Informal networks

Please tell us about your choices.
Part of the MUPI project funding has been allocated to exploring whether a broad museum and university digital network would be feasible or effective. In this section, we would like to ask you about this. Your answers will help to shape any future debates on museum/university digital networks.

We are trying to find out whether people would use a digital networking resource, how they might use it, and in what format this could be (a more interactive experience or a more static experience).

11. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'very unlikely to use' and 5 is 'very likely to use', how likely are you to use a digital resource that helps academics discover cultural heritage collections, museums, and cultural heritage sector expertise? Please give a reason for your answer.

Comments
12. If you feel that you would use such a digital resource, please tell us what you might use it to do? Please tick all the answers that apply.

- Highlight museum/collection research agendas/potential
- Highlight museum workforce expertise
- Highlight museum collections
- Highlight archival material held by your organisation
- Locate museums/cultural heritage organisations
- Locate Higher Education Institutions
- Identify relevant museum collections
- Identify relevant archival material
- Identify potential museum/cultural heritage partners
- Identify relevant university departments/facilities
- Search for museum sector expertise
- Search for relevant academic specialisms
- Search for previous museum/university partnership project

What else do you think you could use the digital resource for?

Digital resources can be either interactive or static in their user experience. When answering the next question, please consider these terms:

- **Interactive** - a networking resource that actively identifies relevant museum collections/expertise and academic interests; and that enables academics and museum staff to connect with each other and start conversations.
**Static** - a database of museums/cultural heritage organisations which highlights their collections, buildings, expertise, research potential, and project/partnerships; and that can searched through and identified by members of the museums and academic sectors based on their interests and needs.
13. Which of the above formats, if any, is most appealing to you?
- Interactive
- Static
- No preference

Please give a reason for your answer.

14. Should the proposed digital resource be...
- Primarily aimed at Higher Education staff
- Primarily aimed at museum/cultural heritage sector staff
- Aimed at both HE and museum/cultural heritage sector staff

Comments

15. Please tell us any other comments you have about the proposed digital resource.
Other comments and prize draw

16. MUPI would like to understand how they could support the development of museum/cultural heritage and university networks in the future. If you have any ideas about how MUPI could support the development of such networks, please write these below.

17. If you would like to enter the prize draw to win a £25 One4All gift voucher, please write your names and email address or telephone number here. The details will only be used for the purpose of the prize draw and will be disposed of in November 2017.

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The Museum University Partnerships Initiative (MUPI) is funded by Arts Council England. For more information about MUPI, please contact Paddy McNulty on paddy@paddymcnulty.co.uk
The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) is internationally recognised for its work supporting and inspiring universities to engage with the public. We work to change perspectives, promote innovation, and nurture and celebrate excellence. We also champion meaningful engagement that makes a real and valued difference to people’s lives.

The NCCPE is supported by the UK Higher Education Councils, Research Councils UK and Wellcome, and has been hosted by the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England since it was established in 2008.

The Museum-University Partnership Initiative (MUPI) was supported by public funding from Arts Council England. It sought to enable museums and universities to meet together and develop mutually beneficial partnerships. A range of resources have been created, drawing on the learning from the MUPI project. You can find all these resources on the NCCPE website.