Share Academy

Bridging the Gap: Scoping Exercise Report

April 2013

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Introduction

Background

Share Academy is exploring the potential of brokering stronger links between universities and museums. It is funded as part of the Arts Council England (ACE) Strategic Funding programme, and the pilot programme ran from October 2012-March 2013. This report summarises the findings of this pilot study.

Share Academy is a partnership between University College London (UCL), University of the Arts London (UAL) and the London Museums Group (LMG), which represents some 250 museums across the capital. The project is led by the university museums at both UCL and UAL, our point of departure being that university museums have the ability to broker these kinds of connections. Share Academy was established on the premise that the benefits of stronger partnership between the museum and higher education sectors could be as follows:

Universities can offer museums	Museums can offer universities
Subject expertise, research frameworks, training opportunities	Audience and public engagement expertise
Business innovation	Interpretation skills
Funding opportunities	Potential for research impact, and impact funding
Student contribution to knowledge exchange	Placements to improve student employability
International partnerships	Community and public sector partnerships

The need for a form of brokering has never been more acute, at a time when public sector funding cuts mean that many museums are losing access to specialist expertise, and when the university sector is under intense pressure to ensure that research has public support and public impact. The introduction of higher student fees has also increased the imperative to link academic courses to practical work placements to increase student employability.

Our aims for this pilot project were to:

* Demonstrate the extent to which capacity and resilience within London's specialist museums can be built by connecting them with sources of expertise
* Channel additional resources into London's specialist museums
* Bring public engagement benefits for universities
* Build on the success of London Museums Group's SHARE London scheme

By undertaking a series of in-depth interviews with museum and academic staff, the pilot project explores the needs and potential areas of partnership that currently exist between the sectors.

The Scoping Study

In total 21 representatives of museums and 29 university academics were interviewed for the scoping exercise, as well as a number of attendees of a LMG event on 10 October 2012 who participated in focus groups. Interviews with these participants took place between 15 October 2012 and the 4 January 2013.

The range of museums included small independent museums, medical museums, local authority museums and galleries, military museums, and a Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and ACE Major Partner Museum funded independent museum. Only one museum was completely volunteer managed, with the remaining having at least one paid member of staff; though the majority had under ten. Only one museum did not have volunteers, with the remaining having under 20; the larger museums had considerably more volunteers, for instance the Horniman Museum has up to 200 volunteers; this reflects their size and ability to devote greater resources to volunteer management.

The academics interviewed were based at either UCL or UAL, with 17 of the 29 coming from UCL. The participants represented a diverse range of academic disciplines, which are summarised as follows:

- Archaeology/Sustainable Heritage/Conservation: 8 interviews

- Museum Studies/Narrative Environments/Curation: 4 interviews

- History/Medical History/Art History: 6 interviews

- Advertising/Communication/Media/Information Studies: 6 interviews

- Art-Science/Design: 2 interviews

- Language & Culture: 1 interview

- Deans of Research – institutional overview: 2 interviews

Two of the 29 university-based interviews were with Associate Deans of Research at UAL and, therefore, their interviews reflected institution-level information and have, consequently, been removed from certain sections of the analysis below. A further interview with an administrator of a Research Centre has likewise been removed from some sections for its focus on the work of more than one academic researcher. However, these contributions were useful in themselves for giving a broader picture of work taking place within higher education.

Challenges

Due to the short time frame we identified a range of museums and academics we would like to interview and invited them to participate, rather than writing to all eligible participants. Thus there is an element of self selection in the sample and

many of the people we contacted for interview we knew had already been engaged in collaborative work across the sectors. This was also reflected by the fact that a number of, mainly smaller, museums said they were keen to be involved as they wanted to develop their working relationships with higher education.

Engagement with museums became more difficult from late November as they were preparing for the Christmas period and the availability of staff to interview decreased. As most of the interview period fell within the busy first term at university, this also posed difficulties for academics in committing their time to be interviewed for our project.

Summary Findings

Experiences of Collaborative Partnership

Level of Experience of Working across the Sectors

All the museums interviewed in the scoping exercise had some experience of working with the higher education sector. There is a wide of range of experience from offering internship or work placements for students through to working on collaborative doctoral theses.

Most relationships operate on an informal ad-hoc basis, loosely based around existing working or professional relationships. In particular, where the museums were small to medium in size, the relationships were based on personal contacts between museum staff and individual academics. A small number of museums had relationships with international higher education sector organisations, in particular US universities whose students were in the UK to gain international work experience.

Similarly, 18 out of 29 academics reported that they worked with existing contacts in museums rather than seeking out new people. This habit was explained by the need for good working relationships on projects and also in terms of the set-up time involved in getting a project off the ground. Of the academics interviewed, half were engaged in extensive and long-term work with museums, five out of 26 had an established record of work in this area, two had engaged in several projects, and six participants had not yet done any collaborative work but were interested in doing so.

The sorts of activities academics engaged in were varied and could roughly be divided into research, teaching, and public engagement – although it was the first two categories that registered as the most prominent activities during the interviews.[1] Just under half of the participants had engaged with research, teaching and public engagement in a museum context, nearly a quarter focused entirely on research and teaching, and about a quarter had not tried any of the three activities as yet. Of those who had already worked on collaborative projects, the vast majority had done so within the last year.

Key Motivations for Engaging in Collaborative Work

A key motivation for museums engaging with the higher education sector was the acquisition of new academic knowledge concerning their collections, which they could then pass on to the public. It was noted, however, that a mismatch could occur between the outcomes of academic research on collections and the desired museum outputs. Nevertheless, museums perceive that there is a wealth of specialist knowledge within academia that could be tapped into by museums and that the museums, as keepers of unique collections, could disseminate academic knowledge to wider audiences.

When questioned on their motivations for engaging with academics, 14 out of 21 museums indicated that it was focused on gaining and sharing knowledge between the sectors; 11 indicated that working with academics improved their

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[1] Research was taken to include creative or art practice, which was the more relevant expression for some of the UAL participants.

capacity to deliver projects; and six stated that the opportunity to access university facilities was a driver for collaboration.

By forming relationships with academics, museums felt that their staff and volunteers' knowledge of their collections was enriched. The academics and/or student volunteers, therefore, contributed a fresh pair of eyes in reviewing the museum's resources and could offer new approaches to interpreting the museum's collections. They also brought skills to the museum that it did not already have or would otherwise be unable to resource. A consequence of this was that in some cases the academic's work reignited staff enthusiasm in the museum's collection and work, making a valuable contribution to staff and volunteer performance within the museum.

Museums also suggested that working with world class academics and universities added kudos to the museum's status within its specialist field or with their trustees and stakeholders. Although this particular outcome was seen as a secondary benefit and not the raison d'être for forming the relationships. Many of the museums did warn, however, that academics are prone to over-estimating the value of the kudos they bring to an organisation, not realising that this only develops in to a tangible benefit if coupled with practical and deliverable public engagement activities.

Broadly speaking, academics were interested in collaborating with the museum sector to enhance their knowledge, increase capacity, and improve the student experience of higher education. For some, contact with museums was considered essential to their research, as one academic working on sustainable heritage commented: "It's core, fundamental to the research questions. It creates the field – there wouldn't be the field without the sector." Others were more focused on the specific collections held my museums - this was especially true of archaeologists. But it was the larger benefits of exposing academic research to wider audiences that motivated some:

> I think, increasingly, academics realise that exposing your research to others, who are not academics, does make it more relevant and stronger because you're getting a different perspective on it and you're testing its resilience.

And also the prospect of demonstrating the value of both museum collections and research:

> The benefit [of collaboration] is two fold: the demonstration of the cultural power of the [museum] sector and the second is, in a climate of museum closures, establishing new networks encourages people to re-think the value of collections they haven't yet come across.

Analysis of the whole sample of academic respondents revealed the following range of motivations for embarking on collaborative projects and partnerships:

Motivation	# of responses	% of participants
Up-to-date knowledge of museum/curatorial practice	4	15%
Access to collections and expertise about collections	6	23%
Research or creative practice opportunities	11	42%
Knowledge exchange and/or collaboration	4	15%
Inspiring teaching experiences/spaces; work experience/ research project opportunities for students	17	65%
Public engagement/outreach/impact opportunities	5	19%
It is just fundamental to the field	3	12%

Opportunities to enhance their teaching and the student experience of learning, therefore, ranked highly in academics' estimation of the gains to be made from forging links with the museum sector. This finding is confirmed by the feedback from museums on their extensive experience of hosting student visits, placements and research projects. For those working in fields such as Museum Studies, Curatorship, or Sustainable Heritage, contact with museums was considered fundamental to their work as a whole.

Quality of Experience

All 21 museums indicated that their overall experience of working with the higher education sector has been positive. Of the academics, no-one reported any negative experiences and the vast majority of participants stressed the highly positive outcomes of this kind of work.

This said, there was a feeling from museums that universities do not always appreciate the lack of funds in the museum sector and expect too much of museum staff in terms of time and resources. As one participant commented:

> Overall our experiences have been positive but academics do not seem to understand the tight resources we have to work with [in terms of money, staff, and time].

In part this misapprehension may be explained by a lack of knowledge amongst academics about the ways in which museums are funded – for example, being dependant on short-term grants, local authority funding agreements, or visitor fees and donations. Some of the museums interviewed indicated that the academics' lack of awareness of the museums' funding structures led them to consider that all

museums were public service institutions, but in reality they are not. There is, in fact, no statutory underpinning for the delivery of a museum service, whether funded and managed by a local authority or run independently. Museums have to fight to either justify their continued funding from public monies, e.g. local authority museums, or invest considerable resources in maintaining funding through grants, donations, and commercial practices. Conversely, museums view universities as being comparatively well funded organisations and sometimes assume that there are funds academics could easily access in order to facilitate collaborative projects. One academic acknowledged the confusion that is sometimes felt in relation to working with museums that are neither simply public service nor straightforwardly profit-making organisations:

> If you work for profit making organisations then in some ways it's easier because they know they want to make money but with museums it's more confused.

A greater understanding of the funding arrangements and structures of both museums and universities would be mutually beneficial in order to dispel such misunderstandings. For example, it would also be useful to stress that when writing a grant application, an academic that wishes to include a collaboration with a museum as part of their project ought to draft in resources for this venture at the application stage. Having said this, it should be noted that 12 museums maintain contact with the universities they have worked with long after their projects had finished and despite the perceived inequalities in resources.

Academics, on the other hand, mainly focused on their reliance on a good working relationship with a key member of museum staff in order to secure access to museum collections, spaces, or expertise. Academics acknowledged, but did not provide a solution to, the problem of different planning horizons within the two sectors, which resulted in universities needing to push ahead with a project much quicker than a museum – with its longer-term planning – can accommodate. Whilst good personal contacts are a fruitful basis for collaboration, it seems that developing clear project guidelines and unified aims at the start of a collaborative project could have important benefits for everyone involved.

Internships, Work Placements, and Student Volunteers
The vast majority of experience amongst museums of working with the higher education sector comes from hosting student internships, work placements, and student volunteers. 17 of the 21 museums interviewed stated they had experience of hosting student internships, placements, or volunteers within the last two years. This was true of museums of all sizes, from the very small (one paid member of staff and a handful of volunteers) through to large national or quasi-national museums. For example, the Horniman Museum and the National Army Museum both regularly and consistently accept interns, work placements and student volunteers.

The students involved in these arrangements gain a wide range of experiences from working on specific projects, such as looking at web development,

museum evaluation and audience development, through to developing museum databases and working on the museum catalogue. In addition, many museums offer more general work experience opportunities to students, deploying them in a number of roles throughout the museums so they can get a feel for how the museum works as a whole. The more varied work experience is often reserved for students from museology courses, rather than more specialised subject areas:

> depending on the student's course we will either try and give them specific projects to work on, or if they are studying on a museology course we will try and make sure they get experience of all the aspects of working in a museum.

Student interns and volunteers, when properly briefed and with appropriate skills and knowledge, were considered a valuable asset by museums, so much so that many museums were interested in developing their student placement programmes further. However, staff noted that by formalising and managing a more ambitious scheme and offering more opportunities to university students, they would place pressure on their already stretched resources. One participant commented on this difficulty as follows:

> We don't have the resources to really support unprepared students … well motivated student interns and volunteers are an asset to the museum, and we try to develop specific projects that they can work on which will benefit them and the museum. Everyone needs to have a clear purpose and outcome at the start of any internship or volunteering placement.

Almost all the academics interviewed stated that they would be interested in developing more opportunities for their students to engage in work or research placements within museums, whether that was as a compulsory aspect of the course curriculum or as an encouraged extra-curricular exercise. An academic described the process of establishing contact between a student and a museum and the beneficial side effects it can bring:

> It can be tricky to find them all suitable placements. I make the first contact with the museum or heritage site and then the student can make contact if it seems suitable. The more options the better. I try to sustain my previous museum networks and by sending one or two students every year, it does facilitate the network.

One academic who ran museum project placements as a compulsory part of a postgraduate course described the positive benefits that could be felt on both sides:

> The museum gets a shot of labour input and a shot of creativity so it can shake things up a bit. And we meet the needs of our students and also the needs of the University in terms of networks. You just have to work hard to

ensure it becomes a positive experience. Our projects are hard work – they're intense.

Interest in particular types of placement varied from embedded longer-term placements planned into courses (as described above) to students arranging their own placements, or a combination of the two. It was stressed that the quality of the collaborative partnership affected the quality of the student placements:

You want consistency and flexibility. Consistent contacts are really important. You need to build a relationship so that they understand your needs but can also work that into their schedules.

The prerequisites for arranging student placements could involve a formal agreement between a certain course and a museum to host a four-week project placement to members of academic staff using their network of museum contacts to facilitate student volunteering. Concern was voiced around the sustainability of longer-term arrangements between museums and universities that facilitated regular student placements. For example, one academic who had been thinking about different models of collaboration between universities and the museums sector suggested a different way of arranging placements for the students on her course:

Instead of having one project with one museum for all the students, we could have 10 museums and 10 small groups of students who could then be matched to solve specific problems in the museums. We would need the infrastructure in place to communicate with people in different locations and to organise these relationships, and that would need money.

University courses that were most dependent on students gaining experience in the museum sector as part of their learning included UCL's MA in Museum Studies, MA in Artefact Studies, and MSc in Conservation. UAL's MA in Creative Practice for Narrative Environments also made extensive use of student project placements within their course. Other UAL undergraduate and postgraduate courses, such as the BA in Culture, Criticism, and Curating and the MA in Media and Cultural Studies were extremely keen to develop their contacts within the museum sector with a view to formalising arrangements around student project and work placements. They were looking for: "A real space in which to test out theories. But principally we want to send students out to do something practical." For those programmes working on areas such as media or advertising, there was an appeal in collaborating with museums as a contrast to private sector organisations: "The fact it is a public sector organisation, which the students are less familiar with, [is appealing]."

When asked what was needed to secure useful student placements within the museum sector, academics gave quite a range of answers. For example, some saw the need for a formal agreement between a particular course and museum, others just required a commitment on a case-by-case basis to a certain length of time for the student to spend within the museum. A significant number of academics

stressed that the key to a successful placement was for the student to develop their knowledge, skills, or experience in a specific academic or career-focused way.

> Placements need to achieve two things: the student needs to understand how the organisation works (this helps them develop new skills, find new opportunities, and encourages career development); short bursts of this isn't very helpful to the museum, so host institutions would prefer long-term internships, which takes much more work setting up but is more mutually beneficial.

Others expressed this need by focusing on the importance of finding the right match of student to placement opportunity. A few academics specifically valued the kind of placement that could be embedded in the curriculum, meet the needs of the whole cohort of students, and run year on year.

Knowledge Exchange

Museums indicated that through their relationships with academics there was an existing knowledge transfer between the sectors. The form in which this took was very dependent on the type of relationship that existed between the museum and the academic at the inception of the relationship. The main benefit of knowledge transfer was articulated as follows:

- The opportunity to gain new insights into the significance of museum collections and the interpretation of them.

One museum participant described this process as follows:

> Working with academics who are using the museum collection for their research has helped us improve our knowledge of our collection. We can then use this when developing new interpretation for the galleries.

Another commented:

> [academics researching our collections has] been good for our staff too - it updates their knowledge and can reinvigorate their interest in something they work with every day. This new enthusiasm is then passed on to members of the public when they visit.

Another area of particular interest was accessing expertise and leading edge techniques in conservation, being developed in universities. The majority of interviewed museums had an existing relationship with either a university or a large, nationally funded cultural heritage organisation which supported their collections care. Although more than half of the museums were happy with their existing arrangement, conservation was highlighted as an area for development, especially in terms of forging formal partnerships between university conservation courses and London museums.

However, issues were cited concerning the ways in which cross-sector relationships functioned, which can be summarised as follows:

- Informal and ad-hoc relationships lead to, similarly, ad hoc knowledge transfer.
- Informal partnerships place undue strain on museums' resources as they seek to assist academics, despite resource, capacity and scheduling difficulties.
- Research on the collections does not always lead to a tangible benefit or outcome for the museum.

In consideration of these comments, it seems that a fuller initial discussion between museums and academics about their expectations of a collaborative partnership might help avoid disappointment. For example, it could be that in exchange for a museum supporting academic research, the academic may offer to deliver lectures for museum groups (museum friends or the public) or help advise on future interpretation of existing collections based on their new research.

Academics were all open to the idea of offering advice to museums, although some were more or less confident about whether their subject specialism would be of direct value to a museum. Also, those who worked in areas such as Museum Studies or Heritage, felt they were dependent on advice from the museum sector itself concerning contemporary professional practice: "I'm very interested in audience research methods, so I seek advice in this area to see if they have tested something new and how it worked and so forth."

Academic offers of advice within this sample of participants included:

- contemporary art and curation
- archaeological object identification for a range of regions and periods
- material analysis of Greek and Roman sculpture and painted surfaces
- advertising and marketing strategies
- participatory planning, social inclusion and audience development
- archiving
- primary research on the Ancient Near East and its artefacts
- design-led social innovation and socially responsive design
- primary research on the history of science and its artefacts
- media theory
- digital technologies.

Even within this small sample of academic participants, there was a great variety in the subject-specialisms upon which they could offer advice. This shows the scope for future partnerships based on a much wider range of topics than have commonly been explored in cross-sector collaboration.

Services and Facilities
Both academics and museum professionals identified a range of services and facilities that might be of use across the sectors. For museums, the most important examples were:

- Access to venues and resources which are able to deliver large scale events, such as conferences.[2]
- Academic libraries and online repositories of research papers, which could add intellectual value to exhibitions and museum interpretation.

Conversely, museums often saw their own archives and object collections as underused or not well known to researchers. For instance, the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust holds paediatric patient records from the 1852 that could be used much more extensively by researchers.

For academics the following facilities were considered of particular use:

- Access to alternative spaces for more unusual events, where emphasis is placed on inspiring or engaging the participants.
- Laboratory facilities for object analysis, but these are only found in larger museums such as the British Museum.
- Use of teaching space within the galleries, or in an adjacent space where object-handling can take place.

One academic who taught Ancient History was particularly keen on improving the facilities available for teaching in crowded, public galleries by allowing for temporary seating in gallery spaces or access to more secluded rooms where objects could be looked at closely.

> It would also be nice to be able to use fold out stools in the gallery space, to sit down with your group in a particular place for a while (they have these in some museums in the States) – you are not encouraged to linger in the galleries, and are expected to move through swiftly like the other tourists.

These comments referred most directly to the large, national museums such as the British Museum and there was not an expectation that smaller museums would be able to provide these facilities.

Practicalities of Collaborative Partnerships

Forging and Maintaining Working Relationships
The scoping exercise identified that most relationships, partnerships and projects have developed on an ad-hoc or informal basis linked to personal or historical relationships between museums, museum staff and academics. There are, in fact, very few strategic museum-university or departmental relationships and both museum and university participants were interested in further developing such arrangements in the future.[3] This form of arrangement is particularly needed for university courses with a compulsory and substantial student project placement

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[2] For example, the 'Freud Yesterday, Freud Today' conference held by the Freud Museum and the British Psychoanalytical Society at the University of Westminster in 2006.

[3] There are some notable exceptions, such as the partnership between the Geffrye Museum and Queen Mary, University of London around the Centre for Studies of Home: http://www.studiesofhome.qmul.ac.uk/

embedded in the curriculum. Amongst the museum and university participants there was a desire for guidance and most people considered a form of facilitated relationship building advantageous in the longer term – especially as it would help to generate new partnerships as well as maintain existing ones.

One consequence of there being mainly informal relationships between museums and academics was that very few projects or relationships had any form of written agreement in place before the practical aspects of the project commenced. Whilst these informal relationships do offer the benefit of flexibility within a project, they can lead to disagreements as neither partner has completely set out what they expect of the partnership and there are no formal opportunities for project reflection and review. If such an understanding was in place at the start of a collaboration, it would not necessarily detract from the existing relationship but could contribute to the smoother running and sustainability of relationships between the sectors.

Access to External Funding for Project Work

Under half of the museums were able to access any external funding from the higher education sector – either directly through their relationships and partnerships with specific universities or academics, or through higher education funders such as HEFCE or the AHRC. Many museum staff felt unable or unsure of how to apply for external funding or how to 'cost up' the time and resources that the museum provides to the university. Museums felt that they would be better placed to further develop relationships with universities if they could state more clearly the potential cost – financial and resource – to their project partners. This in turn would lead to greater understanding of the working practices and resource implications between the two sectors.

The museums thought that they could contribute their knowledge and experience to the academic research community more effectively but did not feel they had an opportunity to liaise with universities or funders at a strategic level. For example, two museums mentioned that they thought there was more scope for AHRC funded doctoral or post-doctoral researchers to contribute to the public understanding of their subject matter, via collaboration with museums. It was felt that currently academic research outputs were strongly focused on academic audiences to the exclusion of public engagement activity. These museums were of the opinion that museum-based public engagement, such as exhibitions, public lectures, or accessible written resources, should be written into research funding applications and that this would hold benefits to the researcher, the museum, academia, and the public.

> [We have worked on higher education funded projects] but they did not fund an exhibition based on the project. Instead the academic got funding to deliver papers at conferences. They [higher education funders] don't understand that museums have public engagement as one of their core functions.

Of the academics interviewed, the majority conducted their collaborative work with museums with no external funding, nearly a third received funding for some but not all of their projects, and only a small number relied on external funding to carry out their work with museums. In fact, in some subject areas collaborative work was carried out principally on an in-kind basis – the academic offering some

technique or expertise to the museum in return for access to their collections. This arrangement worked well for some kinds of activity, but less well for others and lack of funding (even in terms of freeing up staff time) was repeatedly cited as a barrier to collaborative work across the sectors.

> Sometimes the biggest thing is time - there are thousands of things I could think of doing and I don't have any time to do them! And sometimes money. I think there are places where funding could liberate time (my time, and liberating the curator or their assistant's time as well, in order to facilitate the collaboration). It's rarely [completely about] cash, it is more about the lack of freedom.

Barriers to Collaboration

For museums, the key barriers to working with universities were as follows:
- Lack of awareness of the possibilities for future museum/university collaboration: 15 out of 21 museums said that this lack of awareness was a barrier to future collaborations. They also noted that this was "on both sides" and that it was "not a lack of ideas but difficulties with how to realise these."
- Lack of understanding amongst academics of the scope of museum collections and their wide-ranging value as research resources.
- Uncertainty who to approach: most of the museums relied on existing relationships. 14 of the 21 museums indicated that they wanted to develop new collaborations but were unsure who, how, or if they could approach academics who they did not already know.
- Lack of capacity: whilst keen to engage with universities, museums were unable to do so on account of the pressure it placed on their financial and working resources.

For universities, the main obstacles were as follows:
- Different timetables and planning horizons: over half of the academics cited the longer-term planning horizons of museums as a barrier to collaboration.
- Lack of capacity: 11 out of 29 participants considered that there were capacity issues on both sides that hindered the prospects of partnership.
- Uncertainty who to approach: this only affected six participants, those who did not already have well-established networks in the museum sector, but it was still a major obstacle to new collaborative work.

The last of these difficulties was described as follows:

> Not knowing how to break into the system, if you ask the wrong thing of the wrong person then you hit a block and that's never good. Timescales are very significant – for example, when it's for a student project, the timescales are very short and museums don't always want to work that way because they have other more pressing things going on. There are things that feel like bureaucracy, but are often very sensible protocols, but these could still create a barrier. It's perfectly understandable but it doesn't encourage contact.

And another respondent showed awareness that differences in language and mission can also create barriers:

> There are problems, for example, around language – academics use academic jargon or academic terminology. But also the visions are quite different. For an academic it is really important to produce research papers or a monograph or a conference or whatever. For the museum the tangible outcomes could be quite different.

An academic with extensive experience of collaborating with the museum sector described the way she tried to overcome differences:

> My approach understands the fact that each organisation has its own way of thinking and you can't assume that all museums work in the same way. So I try to understand what language and systems of communication you need in place to make the collaboration work.

Having said that, three academics interviewed stated that they felt there were no serious barriers to collaboration and all it required was a bit of effort on both sides.

Networking and Partnership Brokering

The museums interviewed were in favour of facilitated networking opportunities to help foster and establish relationships between themselves and the higher education sector. There was an understanding that web and email based systems were likely to be the most cost effective methods but participants emphasised the need for some face-to-face networking opportunities; and that these face-to-face opportunities had to be offered on an annual basis at the minimum: "an annual conference or networking meeting – with academics! - is what is needed."

Academics were keen on a combination of face-to-face and online networking and many made regular use of online social and professional networking sites, such as Academia.edu or LinkedIn, which are not used extensively by the museums sector. As one respondent commented:

> Using existing social networks, for me it works. I have LinkedIn and I'm using it – and most people work like that. Anytime I feel I want someone I do that on LinkedIn. I am relying on established social networks, not creating new ones.

Having said that, the vast majority of participants (21 of 29) stressed that online fora could not compete with face-to-face opportunities to build the important personal relationships upon which successful collaboration could be based. Some of the most detailed responses on the subject of networking, came from 6 (of 29) participants who described in detail workshop-style sessions which specifically encourage interaction with new people. A more usual response was to cite conferences, exhibitions, or symposia as the most likely spaces for meeting new people. Also, three academics were keen on formal, institution-level agreements between museums and universities that could ensure access and support collaboration between the two on a regular basis.

Complication puts people off, if this could be overcome then all the better. That is the most important thing. The interface could be a webpage, but it would have to represent a privileged relationship between certain universities and certain museums.

The museums were broadly in favour of the SHARE Academy website that is proposed as part of the London Museums Group website, but this seems a more natural forum for museum people. Having said that, academics are not ill-disposed to the idea: 24 reported that they would be interested in exploring such a resource. Although a full brokerage site may prove difficult to sustain without additional funding, there is an opportunity for museums to highlight their collections and areas of potential interest to academics on this site.

Summary of Key Themes

The key themes that have emerged from this scoping study are:

- There is great enthusiasm across the sectors for developing more opportunities for collaboration and partnership, which is based on largely positive experiences of such projects to date.
- Both museums and universities recognise the value collaboration can bring to achieving their distinct institutional aims.
- A culture of relying on existing contacts rather than proactively seeking new contacts is recognised.
- Strategic relationships between museums and academic departments would contribute to sustainable organisational relationships.
- Face-to-face, facilitated, and active networking opportunities are highly valued as opportunities to forge new partnerships through establishing personal relationships.
- Lack of capacity to undertake projects that a) add to existing workload, b) put a strain on existing resources, or c) require external funding creates a barrier to collaboration on both sides.
- Resources spent on facilitation, brokering, and the provision of practical advice would be the most (cost) effective method of breaking down current barriers to collaboration.

Looking Ahead

Scoping Project Actions

On the basis of this scoping project, the immediate actions are to:

- Develop a web-based resource to help academics identify and locate suitable museums in the London region. In order to achieve this, we are focusing on developing the LMG website - completely redesigning it to make it more accessible and intuitive to the user. We have added a Share Academy section that includes a directory of all London museums, with a short description of the museum and contact details. LMG members, and invited academic members, will be able to search an enhanced version of this directory. Museums will be given the opportunity to add information to their records highlighting their collection foci and areas of expert knowledge. The website will also provide a platform to highlight project ideas that would benefit from academic collaboration.

- Write and disseminate three 'How to' guides: *Initiating collaborative partnerships, How to plan a successful collaborative project* and *How to plan a successful student internship*, which will de-mystify the ways in which museums and universities work together and also provide practical advice on how to broker, maintain, and develop collaborative partnerships that help organisations to achieve their strategic goals.

- Produce a series of guidance documents on project planning and the drafting of memorandums of understanding for cross-sector collaborations. Our hope is that by encouraging a more strategic approach to collaborative partnership, we can help these relationships become more sustainable and productive.

- Hold a networking event at which individuals from museums and universities can meet, learn about each other, and forge new partnerships

These actions will completed by mid-May 2013 in preparation for the continuation of the project.

Larger Aspirations for Bridging the Gap

This scoping project has clearly shown the appetite for stable and long-term relationships between the two sectors. In particular, representatives of both museums and universities are keen to establish agreements between their organisations, either at departmental or institutional level. Arrangements of this kind could deliver the stability and longevity needed to build on the exciting work already taking place across the divide.

In March 2013 we were informed that we had been successful in our application for Renaissance Strategic Funding for the period 2013 to 2015. These two years of funding means that we now have an opportunity to develop our project by fully addressing the findings of the scoping exercise and building on the learning that took place around our three pilot projects.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Scoping project questions

The conversations with academic and museum staff were based on the following schedules:

<u>Museums</u>

1. Contact:	
Name	
Job title	
Museum	
Size of the museum: number of staff	
Type of museum	CODE
2. Has your museum worked with universities **before**?	No Yes Don't know
If yes: in what form?	Student internships, placements or volunteering Advice Services or facilities Other Description:
Date	Within the last year More than a year ago
Subject	
Any external funding	Yes No Comments:
Was the overall experience positive or negative? Why?	Positive Negative Comments:
What did the museum gain?	Knowledge Capacity Facilities Other Comment:
Have you had any contact with the university since? If not why not?	Yes No Comment:

What, if anything was special about collaborating with a university rather than a different type of partner?	Yes No Comment:
3. What are the **barriers** to collaboration between museums are universities?	Lack of awareness of the possibilities Uncertainty who to approach Difficulty matching exact needs Lack of confidence to develop relationships Lack of capacity Cost Difference in the language used Different timetable or planning horizons Reservations about quality or relevance. Previous negative experiences Comments:
4. Would your museum be interested in **student internships, placements or volunteering**?	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would student internships, placements or volunteering need to take to be of interest to your museum?	Comment:
Do you have a specific project or activity that would benefit from student internships, placements or volunteering?	No Yes, what?
5. Would your museum be interested in **advice** from academics? e.g. on preventative conservation, curatorial, specialist knowledge	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would advice from academics need to take to be of interest to your museum?	Comment:
Do you have a specific subject on which would benefit from advice from an academic?	No Yes, what?
6. Would your museum be interested in **services or facilities** from a university? e.g. graphic identity, space, equipment, library	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would services or facilities need to take to be of interest to your museum?	Comment:

Do you have a specific need for a service or facility that could be delivered by a university?	No Yes, what?
7. Would your museum be interested joining a **network** with academics?	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would networking need to take to be of interest to your museum?	Comment:
8. For your museum, what are the main **attractions** of collaborating with a university?	Knowledge Capacity Facilities Other Comment:
9. We are thinking that matching could be carried out by creating a special area of SHARE for academic matching? Would you use it?	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
10. Do you think it is a good **idea** to encourage collaboration between museums and universities?	Very good idea Good idea Mixed Poor idea Very poor idea Comment:
11. Is collaboration between museums and universities more or less relevant in a **recession**?	More relevant Less relevant Same Comment:
12. Is there any follow up that they would like from the interview	No Yes, what?

Universities

1. Contact:	
Name	
Job title	
Department	

2. Have you worked with museums **before**?	No Yes Don't know
If yes: in what form?	
Date	Within the last year More than a year ago
Subject	
Any external funding	Yes No Comments:
Was the overall experience positive or negative? Why?	Positive Negative Comments:
What did you gain?	
Have you had any contact with the museum since? If not why not?	Yes No Comment:
What, if anything, was special about collaborating with a museum rather than another institution?	
3. What are the **barriers** to collaboration between museums are universities?	Lack of awareness of the possibilities Uncertainty who to approach Difficulty matching exact needs Lack of confidence in approaching Capacity Cost Different timetable/planning horizons Reservations about quality or relevance Previous negative experiences Comments:
4. Would you be interested in **opportunities for your students to take part in museum internships, placements or volunteering**?	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would museum student internships, placements or volunteering need to take to be of interest to you?	Comment:

Do you have a specific project or activity that would benefit from museum student internships, placements or volunteering?	No Yes, what?
5. Would you be interested in offering **advice** to museum staff? e.g. subject specialist knowledge	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form of advice might you be able to offer?	Comment:
Do you have a specific subject on which you would benefit from advice from museum staff?	No Yes, what?
6. Would you be interested in **services or facilities** from a museum? E.g. space, objects	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would services or facilities need to take to be of interest to you?	Comment:
Do you have a specific need that could be delivered by a museum?	No Yes, what?
7. Would you be interested joining a **network** with museums?	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:
What form would networking need to take to be of interest to you?	Comment:
8. For you, what are the main **attractions** of collaborating with a museum?	Knowledge Capacity Facilities Other Comment:
9. We are thinking that brokerage could be carried out by creating a special area of SHARE on London Museum Group's website for academic matching? Would you use it?	Yes definitely Yes possibly Don't know Probably not Definitely not Comments:

10. Do you think it is a good **idea** to encourage collaboration between museums and universities?	Very good idea Good idea Mixed Poor idea Very poor idea
11. Is collaboration between museums and universities more or less relevant in a **recession**?	More relevant Less relevant Same Comment:
12. Is there any follow up that they would like from the interview	No Yes, what?

Appendix 2: Sharing Expertise and Access to Collections

The academics interviewed were happy to advise museums on their subject specialist fields, which included the following:

Curation and Contemporary Art
Contemporary art and curation
Curation
Documentary film curating
Italian contemporary art and art film

Design and Advertising
Industrial design, design-led social innovation and socially responsive design
Public relations and marketing, communications and media campaigns
Advertising strategy

Professional Practice in Museums
Museum Studies
Participatory planning, social inclusion, audience development.
Participatory trends and the design of museum experiences
Community engagement and professional practice
Community projects, development, exhibition design
Collections care and management to exhibitions or events; object handling and teaching with objects
Archiving

Conservation and Heritage
Material analysis Greek and Roman sculpture, painted surfaces.
Climate change related to cultural heritage

Archaeology and Ancient History
South American archaeology collections
South American history and culture
Ancient Near East – history and artefacts
Near Eastern archaeology collections
Lithics collections

History and Theory
History of Medicine
History of science
Dutch History
How the government-driven politics of aesthetics encompasses both the museum and the art school
Media theory and sociology of history
Digital Humanities

Appendix 3: Museums interviewed

The museums interviewed for the project encompassed the full range of museum types in the region, from small independents, medium sized Local Authority funded museums, and larger nationally funded museums. They were:

British Optical Association Museum

Bruce Castle Museum

The Cinema Museum

Dr. Johnson's House

The Fan Museum

The Freud Museum

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust

Handle House Museum

Horniman Museum

Islington Museum

The Library and Museum of Freemasonry

Museum of Brands

Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

National Army Museum

The Old Operating Theatre

Orleans House Gallery

The Ragged School Museum

Royal College of Music Museum

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre

Valence House

White Lodge Museum & Ballet Resource Centre