

**MUSEUMS  
ASSOCIATION**

**Conference** Edinburgh International  
8-9 November Conference Centre

# EDINBURGH 2012

[www.museumsassociation.org/conference](http://www.museumsassociation.org/conference)



## Conference times

### Wednesday

**Registration** 1700-1900

**Evening reception** 1900-2100

### Thursday

**Breakfast tours** 0730-0830

**Registration** 0800 onwards

**Core sessions** 0900-1830

**Networking event** 1845-2100

### Friday

**Breakfast tours** 0730-0830

**Registration** 0800 onwards

**Core sessions** 0900-1730

With the support of:



# Conference 8-9 November Edinburgh

## Embracing change

Cuts, closures, changes of governance – it's often difficult to look beyond the immediate short-term problems. But raising our sights and thinking about the future role that museums can play in society could unleash pent-up creativity and help determine the direction of museums over the next decade.

Conference provides a great opportunity for you to network with colleagues from across the UK, share best practice and debate the future priorities of the sector.

Moves towards further independence, political change and financial belt-tightening mean the role of museums in society and the environment they operate in is undergoing a transformation.

Conference themes look at how we can face up to and embrace change. The cultural repercussions of devolution and what it means for individual and collective identity is explored in One Nation? The Social Justice theme looks at how museums can tackle inequality, and Museums 2020 invites delegates to discuss their future vision for museums.

Come to conference and help shape the future of your sector.

**Sharon Heal,**  
head of publications and events, Museums Association



# Themes



## One Nation?

Coordinated by **Rowan Julie Brown**, director, National Mining Museum Scotland

In the context of fractious political debate on the topic of independence and changing governance in the British Isles, this theme explores the existence of a discernable national identity and questions how and why nationhood impacts on museums.



## Social Justice

Coordinated by **David Anderson**, director, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

As we stand on the brink of the most significant cuts in public expenditure in living memory, is the role of museums in social justice a luxury of the relatively affluent Noughties? Or, alternatively, is it a core commitment that is more vital than ever? And, as many museums reduce their provision for education and community participation, how can the resources that remain be applied more effectively?



## Museums 2020

Coordinated by **Nat Edwards**, director, Robert Burns Birthplace Museum

Museums 2020 is the Museums Association's project to create and campaign for a bold and clear vision of museums and their public impact. What difference can museums make to individuals, to communities, to society and to the environment? This theme provides opportunities to critically examine the purpose of museums with a view to building an ambitious and unified vision for the future.

## Sessions

The three themes provide a route through the conference but there are plenty of other sessions to attend. There are also keynote speeches, debates, training and networking sessions.

## Exhibition

The exhibition runs concurrently to the conference. It brings together the most innovative suppliers and consultants in the sector for you to discuss ideas with and discover the latest products and services for your museum.

## Marketplace

Associated bodies, sector organisations and specialist groups share information with delegates and visitors to the exhibition. The marketplace is open on Thursday only.

## Museum Practice workshops

The exhibition is also host to a series of workshops that highlight best practice in museum projects. They are free of charge and open to all.

## Smarter Training

Our Smarter Training Rooms provide bite-size training opportunities throughout the conference. Pick up tips on running effective meetings, diversifying funding streams, advocacy, getting the best out of Twitter and writing effective text. This training is open to all delegates.

## Evening receptions

There are networking receptions for delegates and exhibitors on both evenings. On Wednesday visit the recently redeveloped Scottish National Portrait Gallery. On Thursday see the refurbished galleries at the National Museum of Scotland.



## Storyteller in residence

Donald Smith is founder and director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre. He is a storyteller, performance poet and novelist, who has a lifelong fascination with museums. In residence at conference, Donald will use live narrative to interpret the voices and experiences of participants.



# Thursday

## Highlights

- Behind-the-scenes breakfast tours of the newly refurbished galleries at the National Museum of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery
- Exhibition opens and Museum Practice workshops run throughout the day
- Keynote address by Aamer Anwar the Glasgow-based human rights lawyer
- Presidential address. The MA president outlines the priorities for the MA
- Evening networking event at the National Museum of Scotland

## Session highlights:

- **Speak out**  
Disabled cultural professionals discuss inequality in museums and promote examples for positive change.
- **Into India**  
A critical look at what can be learnt from museums involved in cultural exchange with India.
- **The teaching museum**  
A panel of specialists debate the role that museums can play in shaping the future workforce.
- **The playful museum**  
How the Happy Museum principles have been put into practice.

## Morning

### Breakfast tours

Behind-the-scenes breakfast tours of the newly refurbished galleries at the National Museum of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

### Opening keynote

Fiona Hyslop, cabinet secretary for culture and external affairs, welcomes delegates to Edinburgh and outlines the progress on the implementation of the Scottish Museums Strategy.

## Themed sessions

### One Nation? Being British

Following the ill-fated campaign for the Museum of British History, this session questions whether a monothematic presentation of British identity is either achievable or desirable. It explores the different interpretations of identity across UK museums and questions the motivations underpinning presentations of identity and how it impacts on our visitors.

### Social Justice The just museum

Should social justice be at the core of every museum, informing all aspects of their work? Is there a shared definition of the term and what does it take to deliver this agenda? Help develop the thinking on this important topic, which for many museums is at the heart of their founding purpose, and is easy to say but harder to do.

### Museums 2020 The future is now

A discussion on the big question – how will museums make a difference to the life of people in 2020? Led by a surprise guest speaker from the future.



## Other sessions

### Speak out

Disabled employees with significant professional experience reflect on the extent to which museums have transformed themselves to make access integral to what they do. Speakers discuss management, employment, user involvement and the visitor experience and present an agenda for change.

### Three steps to heaven

Museums exist for their visitors but all too often they get lost down the cracks. This workshop explores how to implement a visitor-centred policy from the perspective of the staff and the audience.

## Knowledge exchange: let a thousand flowers bloom

The debate about the supposed conflict between academic excellence and community engagement has become polarised. Speakers argue that museums deal with different types of knowledge and in engaging with a wide range of audiences it is crucial that they are given equal weight, not fixed in a hierarchy.

## Teaching museums: shaping the next generation

Are we supporting the development of the skills that future museum professionals need or is our training lagging behind society's expectations? A panel of specialists challenge current thinking and debate whether museums should take a more proactive role, using their in-house staff to train interns in vocational skills.

## The elephant in the room

Natural history collections are under threat but are vital for taxonomic research, environmental monitoring and education. The number of specialist curators is declining, so should collections be redistributed to centres of excellence or are there other solutions for orphaned collections?

## Into India

A critical look at what can be learnt from museums involved in cultural exchange with India, including what Indian partner museums are seeking from collaboration and how a range of museums can work more closely with the country.

## Never mind the curriculum, where's the beef?

This session explores how different curricula across the nations can distort the learning impact of museums, and how museums can find ways to take learning deeper, reach visitors' emotional roots and connect us with collections.

## Afternoon

## Keynote

Aamer Anwar, the human rights lawyer, talks about his personal vision of cultural identity and the role museums can play in promoting social justice.

## Themed sessions

### One Nation? Devolution deficit?

Does more local control of museums increase accountability, or does it simply increase cost? This session investigates the potential implications of greater devolution on the cultural sector examining issues from multi-lingual interpretation to the impact on the public purse.

### Social Justice Save the children

This session covers the reality of participation poverty, the ways in which museums and galleries can make a real difference and how the approaches taken in Wales, England and Scotland are changing thinking about tackling child poverty.

## Museums 2020 Into the Dragon's Den, winning arguments for museums

We often make a passionate case for the difference museums make to individuals and communities but can a selection of recent museum projects stand up to the scrutiny of influential decision makers from outside the sector?

## Other sessions

## Café Scientifique: exploring the science within your collection

Café Scientifique provides a place where anyone can come to discuss the latest scientific research and interesting issues. Hear from museums running their own cafés and have a chance to explore the science behind your collection.

## Expanding horizons

In the current economic climate many museums are exploring the commercial potential of international partnerships. Yet there is a strong moral case for a more ethical approach aimed at sharing skills and increasing dialogue. Using case studies from contemporary work in the Balkans, this session invites delegates to discuss how we might do this effectively.





## Let's get digital

This year for the first time the Heritage Lottery Fund will fund digital-only projects. This session explores how such projects can enhance meaningful engagement with audiences with three practitioners from inside and outside the museum sector.

## Shifting populations: museums and galleries of migration

Can museums contribute to a greater understanding of migration and population movement across the UK and Europe? The session looks at museums' work with migrant groups, the role of museums in changing attitudes, and the interpretation of significant historic migrations and the lessons they provide for today.

## The playful museum

Through a series of participatory and playful activities this session demonstrates how Manchester Museum has begun to put the Happy Museum principles into practice.

## What the doctor ordered

This experiential workshop explores the realities of collaborative working between the health and museum sectors and includes case studies from Manchester's Health+Culture partnership programme.

## Unlocking the past

Can using museum objects really make a difference to prisoners' lives? Case studies explore the link between crime and social exclusion, and the value of offenders working with real museum objects.

## Annual general meeting

Members can find out about the MA's activities in the last year and its plans for the year ahead.

## Presidential address

MA president Vanessa Trevelyan outlines the state of the sector and the priorities for the year.

## Evening

## Networking reception

All delegates and exhibitors are invited to celebrate the culmination of the MA's Effective Collections scheme at the National Museum of Scotland.



# Thursday & Friday

## All day

### Exhibition

The exhibition runs concurrently to the conference. It brings together the most innovative suppliers and consultants in the sector for you to discuss ideas with and find out about the latest products and services for your museum.

### Museum Practice workshops

The exhibition is also host to a series of workshops that highlight best practice in museum projects. They are free of charge and open to all. [www.museumsassociation.org/visitexhibition](http://www.museumsassociation.org/visitexhibition)

### Smarter Training

Our Smarter Training Rooms provide bite-size training opportunities throughout the conference. Pick up tips on running effective meetings, diversifying funding streams, advocacy, getting the best out of Twitter and writing effective text. This training is open to all delegates.

## Effective Collections

The MA supports museums working with their collections through the Effective Collections programme and the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. Effective Collections gave grants to over 40 museum projects to improve the use of stored collections. Come and find out more at various events during conference including:

- use of collections Q&A with Effective Collections project coaches
- an Effective Collections marketplace
- a drop-in surgery at the MA stand for anyone wanting advice on applying to the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund.

# Friday

## Highlights

- Behind-the-scenes breakfast tours of the newly refurbished galleries at the National Museum of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery
- Exhibition open all day and Museum Practice workshops run throughout the day
- Keynote, Martin Roth, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum

## Session highlights:

### ●Philanthropy

This session addresses the myths and reality around the philanthropy agenda and helps delegates understand why it matters and what the opportunities are for museums.

### ●Hold the front page

A topical session brought to you by the Museums Journal team.

### ●Child's play

Museums provide a safe, social space that encourages learning and promotes play. Discover how museums can connect with families by creating high-quality provision for an early-years audience.

### ●IObject!

Studies show that conflict - expressing and debating differences - is critically important for individuals' expression of identity. Yet museums traditionally avoid conflict. Explore how conflict might be used productively in work with audiences.

## Morning

## Breakfast tour

Behind-the-scenes breakfast tours of the newly refurbished galleries at the National Museum of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

## Themed sessions

### One Nation? Stronger together

At a time when museums are under pressure from all sides, partnership working is vital. This session looks at how the museum strategies in Wales and Scotland are giving the sector a united voice.

### Social Justice Participation: upping the ante

Research shows that engagement and participation are vulnerable to short-term funding and in many cases not rooted in core purpose. This workshop is an opportunity to learn from museums that are undergoing organisational change to embed participation in the core of what they do, as part of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Our Museum programme.

### Museums 2020 Great lies to tell about museums

This session explores the stories that we tell ourselves about museums. Panel members discuss lies such as 'Museums are brilliant at partnership', 'Handling objects cures all known ailments', and 'Museums are really cool'. There will be participation and laughter, and some fibbing too.

## Other sessions

### Philanthropy - why does it matter?

This session addresses the myths and reality around the philanthropy agenda and helps delegates across the whole of the UK to understand why it matters and what the opportunities are for museums. It also looks at what support is available to help strengthen fundraising skills and the sustainability of collections and museums.

### Go digital: an holistic approach

This session explores the importance of developing a digital strategy. It provides insight into how organisations can incorporate digital into a holistic approach that meets wider organisational and public engagement objectives and looks at how to use digital engagement as a catalyst to drive organisational change.



## Other sessions continued

### Stage struck

What happens if we think of visitors and staff as “performers”? This session explores what might happen if we think of our galleries as sets and our collections as props, and how we could work differently if we think theatrically?

### I Object! Working through conflict in museums

Recent studies show that conflict - expressing and debating differences - is critically important for individuals' expression of identity. Yet museums traditionally avoid conflict, seeking instead neutrality or consensus. This session is for anyone who finds the idea of working through conflict challenging, and explores how conflict might be used productively in work with audiences.

### Child's play

Museums provide a safe, social space that encourages learning and promotes play. This session looks at how museums can connect with their local families through creating high-quality provision for an early-years audience.

### Crash - tackling risk and mortality

The Riverside display 'Crash' is the retelling of a road accident. The story is delivered through the eyes of the key protagonists involved. This session explores how 'Crash' challenges traditional displays and asks how museums can address uncomfortable topics, with speakers from the museum and reflections from the emergency and medical staff involved.

### Hold the front page

A topical session brought to you by the Museums Journal team.

## Afternoon

### Keynote

Martin Roth, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.



## Themed sessions

### One Nation? International identities

Does our history shape our current international activity? How do we work effectively with our counterparts abroad? This session assesses international collaboration and questions whether such partnerships are motivated by collection priorities, historical links or political agendas.

### Social Justice Cultural rights - irrelevance or priority?

Cultural rights are one of the five inalienable rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet they are rarely discussed. Is this because they are well provided for in plural, developed democratic nations such as the UK? Or do we need to take this issue more seriously? Join the debate, and help to define how - if at all - the museum sector should respond.

### Museums 2020 Get your bloody tools out

Who will be working in museums in 2020 and how will they get there? Could it ever be possible that inner-city rioters might be able to imagine being the museum workers of 2020?

## Other sessions

### Ethical dilemmas for the 21st-century museum

This session explores the changing nature of museum ethics. Speakers look at ethics across a range of disciplines, from business to law and medicine, to offer new approaches to the moral challenges and opportunities that people who work in museums face.

### The social museum

Museums should be social organisations, but do their internal structures and practices sufficiently reflect this? In some cases, museums are so debilitated by their internal unsociability that they are not able to have effective external social communication. This session demonstrates why this happens and how to begin culture change to become a social museum.





# National Museums Scotland Attracts Over 1.5m Visitors In First Five Months Of Relaunch



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After successfully completing the new 16 Galleries for the Royal Museum Project, the Museum smashed it's visitor targets of 500,000 with over 1.5m visitors in the first five months. A true testament to the quality of the design, fabrication and installation.