



Pilot project: MLA South East

“a series of pilot long loans as part of Effective Collections to serve as best-practice models for future work in the region”

Supported by
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In this pilot, Effective Collections is working with MLA South East to develop the Sharing Collections Project for the Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire (BOB) sub-region. The work is being jointly funded by the Renaissance SE Museum Development Fund, Effective Collections and Culture MK and will be delivered over a year-long period, focusing on increasing loans throughout and beyond BOB museums. The project will be closely linked to the BOB Museum Development Service.

A Sharing Collections advisor has recently been appointed to manage the project, which has a set of broad outcomes that build on the aims of Effective Collections and Renaissance. The advisor's wider remit includes foundation work to increase the potential and capacity for long and short-term loans within the BOB sub-region and between BOB and external museums, as well as the rationalisation of stored collections. Whilst it is hoped the benefits will be felt in museums across the three counties, some of the work will be focused in Milton Keynes, reflecting the funding contribution of Culture MK.

The advisor will facilitate the upgrading of exhibition space in BOB museums (and related premises) to increase the ability of organisations to receive objects and exhibitions on loan, and work to address gaps in skills, knowledge and resources across the BOB sub-region, which may previously have been a barrier to lending and borrowing. Using the upgraded space and skills, the advisor will broker, in the role outlined above, a series of pilot long loans as part of Effective Collections to serve as best-practice models for future work in the region.

Through their work with staff and venues across BOB, the Sharing Collections advisor is well placed to find interesting opportunities for loans between museums within the region. As part of their ongoing work the advisor is building networks to develop future lending opportunities, and focusing their brokering role within the year on arranging at least two or three long loans between museums in the region and a further two or three with museums beyond BOB. While the pilot phase of Effective Collections is necessarily opportunist in trialling processes, the ongoing work of the advisor reflects our longer-term need to consider museums across the whole sector to spread Effective Collections resources across the board.

The Effective Collections programme will also provide support to review two stored collections in the region. In each case, curators will work with a reviewer and a small collection of objects for a short period to gain confidence in the review process ready to continue independently. The Sharing Collections advisor will coordinate this process and assist museums by brokering resultant loans and guiding museums through considering appropriate disposal using the MA's Disposal Toolkit.

On an ambitious scale, this pilot project trials many of the different aspects of the anticipated Effective Collections programme. On a practical level, museums will use the programme's collections review guidance, model loan forms and disposal toolkit and then offer valuable feedback. Looking ahead, we hope this pilot project will result in a number of long loans and transfers of objects around the country, and also demonstrate that a shift in approaches to lending is worthwhile.