



The role of museums has changed over time and never more so than in the last 10-15 years. As well as their traditional role of collecting, preserving and sharing rich collections, museums now find that they play an increasing role in supporting the development of communities. Museums can be a place to help shape community identity and bring different community groups together, a catalyst for regeneration through the creation of new venues and civic spaces, and a resource for developing the skills and confidence of members of those communities.

Museums are using their unique collections and services to address social issues. They are striving to be places where all sections of the community can have a voice and be reflected in a museum's collections and displays. Through volunteering programmes, internships, apprenticeships and work placements they are proving to be a valuable resource for the development of basic and specialist job skills.

"Our museums have reach and resonance. By working with local partners museums engage communities with their cultural heritage right across the UK. Museums are spaces in which identities are understood, formed and shared. They provide a stimulating public space in which people can come together and be inspired."¹

"Cultural institutions provide the glue that binds communities together. Culture attracts people to a place, just as much as good schools, housing or transport and creates an environment in which other industries, goods and services can grow."²

Museums and heritage are valued by their communities:

- 82% of British people want to have a museum or art gallery in their local town or city³.
- 87% of people think the historic environment plays an important part in the cultural life of the country⁴

Museums and heritage bring people together:

- They contribute to civic engagement: there are 3,000 volunteers and over 140,000 friends linked to major UK museums.⁵

- The profile of museum visitors is broadening. Since 2002/3 there has been a 36% increase in the number of visits to national museums from people in low-income groups C2DE. Renaissance funded museums delivered a 24% increase in visitor numbers from low-income groups C2DE and a 6% increase in black and minority ethnic visitors⁶. Around 40% of adults from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, 58% of adults with a limiting disability or illness, and 56% of adults from lower socio-economic groups visited at least one type of designated historic environment site during the last year⁷
- In 2008/09 there were over 664,000 instances of on-site activity with adults (up 37% since 2006/07) and over 268,000 instances of outreach activity with adults in Renaissance funded museums.⁸
- Renaissance Hub museums worked with over 3,400 adult community groups in 2008/9⁹
- Heritage Open Days, organised by volunteers for local people, are the biggest mass participation event in England with over 3,500 properties and over one million people taking part¹⁰.

Museums support the development of community cohesion:

- 45% of museum-goers agree they feel more positive towards other people and their cultures as a result of a visit to a museum.¹¹
- 81% of teachers think it either 'likely' or 'very likely' that pupils had learned more about other people and communities as a result of visits to museums¹².

Museums support regeneration and the development of the local economy:

- "Culture is at the heart of public places and museums can help raise the profile and quality of life in urban centres"¹³
- The museum sector is supporting a large workforce. There are around 2000 museums in England, employing over 27,600 people, with over 4300 employed in local authority museums¹⁴
- Over 100,000 people in the UK (94,000 in England and Wales) volunteer at independent museums, with 20,000 volunteering regularly, providing the equivalent of 6,470 full time employees or £108 million of independent museum's resources¹⁵

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- ¹ National Museum Directors Conference (NMDC), 'Museums Deliver', (2010):
http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/what_we_do_documents/museums_deliver_full.pdf
- ² NMDC, 'Values and Vision: The Contribution of Culture' (2006):
http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/values_and_vision.pdf
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Heritage Link, English Heritage, Historic Houses Association, National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund, 'Valuing our Heritage: The case for future investment in the historic environment', (2006):
<http://www.hha.org.uk/our-policies/research/valuing-our-heritage.html>
- ⁵ NMDC, 'Museums Deliver' (as above)
- ⁶ NMDC, 'Values and Vision: The Contribution of Culture' (as above)
- ⁷ Heritage Link, English Heritage, Historic Houses Association, National Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, 'Valuing our Heritage: The case for future investment in the historic environment' (as above)
- ⁸ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre on behalf of Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), 'Renaissance Data Collection: Hub Results for 2008-09', (2009):
<http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/documents/Renaissance%20Data%20Collection%20Annual%20Report%202008-09.pdf>
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Heritage Link, English Heritage, Historic Houses Association, National Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, 'Valuing our Heritage: The case for future investment in the historic environment' (as above)
- ¹¹ Demos, 'Knowledge and Inspiration: the democratic face of culture. Evidence in Making the Case for Museums, Libraries and Archives', (August 2006):
<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/knowledgeandinspiration>
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ NMDC, 'Museums Deliver' (as above)
- ¹⁴ LISU at Loughborough University for MLA, 'Digest of Statistics 2006' (2006):
http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/documents/digest_of_statistics_2006_10589.pdf
- ¹⁵ Babbidge, Adrian, Egreria, for the Association of Independent Museums, 'Volunteering in Independent Museums: A Research Study', (2009):
<http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/downloads/84797761414092009152924.pdf>