

A DECADE OF SUCCESS

Supporting research in
the UK's major culture and
heritage organisations



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Ten years ago, the way that arts and humanities research is funded in the UK changed.

A number of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage bodies were designated as Independent Research Organisations (IROs), enabling the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to support an increasing number of outstanding projects.

**As of June 2017, the Independent Research
Organisations include:**

British Film Institute (became an IRO in 2017)
British Institute of International and Comparative Law
The British Library
The British Museum
Historic England (became an IRO in 2017)
Historic Environment Scotland
Historic Royal Palaces
Imperial War Museums
Museum of London Archaeology
The National Archives
The National Gallery
National Maritime Museum
National Museum Wales
National Museums Liverpool
National Museum of Scotland
National Portrait Gallery
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Science Museum Group
Tate
Victoria and Albert Museum

The Independent Research Organisations: a showcase for arts and humanities research

The UK's cultural and heritage organisations, including our galleries, museums and conservation bodies, are central to our national life and are a vital part of our identity across the globe. For most of these organisations, research plays a key role in supporting their activities: without research, they would not be able to engage audiences in the same way, or make their many other contributions to public life. Without research, our culture and heritage organisations would not have had such a positive impact on the UK – on our economy, on our quality of life and on our influence overseas.

Cultural organisations and practitioners contribute £27 billion to the UK economy each year and the cultural sector employs around 624,000 people.

Ten years ago, the way that arts and humanities research is funded in the UK changed.

A number of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage bodies were designated Independent Research Organisations (IROs), enabling the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to support an increasing number of outstanding projects.

Granting IRO status was a way of acknowledging the excellent research already taking place in cultural organisations – research often centred on unique, world-class archives and collections. Being an IRO meant that organisations could lead on AHRC-funded research projects, and, as this publication shows, this research has now fed into the work of culture and heritage organisations in many different ways.

Over the last decade, the AHRC's support for the IROs has led to a wide range of benefits: for the organisations themselves, including in-house researchers; the university-based researchers who work with them, and crucially for the general public and the UK as a whole. Between them, the culture and heritage organisations that make up the IROs, attract millions of visitors every year. Of the top 30 visitor

attractions in the UK, 14 have IRO status. Their curators and other museum professionals undertake cutting-edge research, and this in turn ensures that visitors have a fuller and deeper experience. These organisations are a wonderful showcase for arts and humanities research, in all its richness and variety.

Read on to discover the many different benefits created by the IROs.



Professor Andrew Thompson

Chief Executive, Arts and Humanities Research Council

 @profathompson

Ten years of the Independent Research Organisations – an overview

When cultural and heritage organisations started to gain Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status from 2006/7 onwards, the AHRC was able, for the first time, to provide significant support for arts and humanities research taking place outside of higher education institutions.

By giving IRO status to organisations such as museums, galleries and heritage bodies, the AHRC was able to recognise these organisations as places where high-quality research takes place. This in turn helped the IROs develop their research capability to remain at the cutting-edge of history and heritage as well as new digital technologies that are transforming the ways that arts and culture are experienced and consumed. The IROs have taken the lead on research projects, collaborating with university researchers as equal partners.

IROs are playing a vital role in training the next generation of researchers that allow them to create a bank of skills designed to benefit their career progression. Doctoral students will continue to collaborate closely with universities on producing high quality research and have the opportunity to work with curators, exhibition teams and learn about the art of communications.

To qualify as an IRO, an organisation had to demonstrate that it already has a capacity for high-quality research. This research derives from an intimate knowledge of unique, world-class collections and heritage sites, which are unrivalled assets for the UK.

“

Research is based around an intimate knowledge of unique, world-class collections and heritage sites, which are unrivalled assets for the UK.

”

Benefits for cultural and heritage organisations

Undoubtedly, these developments have been hugely enriching for culture and heritage organisations. IRO status has encouraged them to develop a vibrant and resilient research culture (see *A Bigger Splash* – page 35), and helped them achieve their core objectives of promoting a better understanding of their collections, and engaging their public in what they do (see *Face to face with The Tudors* – page 15). It has also helped them to engage and collaborate with similar organisations around the world (see *Cultural exchange across the globe* – page 19). It has enabled them to find innovative ways of appealing to audiences (see *History at our fingertips* – page 47) and allowed them to take risks and produce powerful ground-breaking exhibitions (see *Building bridges* – page 43).

IRO status will also often mean organisations can leverage additional funding from elsewhere. Some have seen their external research funding increase more than twenty-fold since becoming an IRO, with much of this money coming from overseas.

For Tate's Research Manager, Ailsa Roberts, 'Being an IRO gives us credibility, and it helps us to explain our status as a research organisation.' Rebecca Bailey from Historic Environment Scotland adds, 'Being an IRO has given focus and confidence to our research. It's stretched us, stimulating our research ideas. And while we were always research-focused, being an IRO has made it easier to communicate that fact to our partners.'

The Gallery of Lost Art:
An immersive, online
exhibition that told the
stories of artworks that
disappeared. © Tate



Benefits for researchers

Having the chance to collaborate with the IROs is also beneficial for university researchers – they get to work with unique, world-leading collections, and alongside their counterparts in cultural and heritage organisations – the expert curators who bring years of specialist knowledge of their institution’s collections.

In particular, early career researchers gain from the opportunities offered within our national heritage organisations. Most IROs also hold Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships and, as such, partner with universities in the supervision and training of doctoral students. The students recruited to these prestigious schemes have the chance to train outside of higher education institutions in world-class museums, galleries or archives. They get hands-on experience of working with outstanding collections, and to work in the multi-disciplinary ways that are standard in culture and heritage organisations. In turn the IROs get an injection of energy and new thinking from their students, leading to new insights into their holdings.

Doctoral students
outside Imperial
War Museum
London. From left
to right: Rebecca
Coll, Lizzie Oliver,
Anna Maguire, James
Wallis, Alys Cundy
and Leanne Green

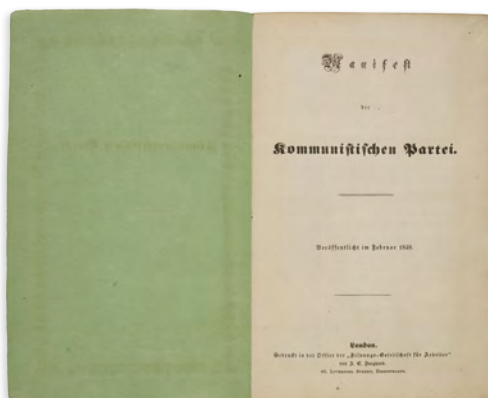


Benefits for the AHRC

For AHRC, supporting the research of IROs adds something distinctive to the UK research landscape. Each IRO has a specific, specialised set of knowledge, skills and resources of national and international significance. These are organisations that are inherently public-facing, they are geared up for getting big audiences through their doors. The IROs have a unique role in bringing high quality arts and humanities research to a wider public.

Professor Andrew Thompson, Chief Executive of the AHRC, said: 'IRO status gives cultural and heritage organisations something unique when receiving funding from the AHRC. Working with the IRO's is important for us as their public engagement and major exhibitions allow visitors to experience first-hand how world class research adds so much to our understanding of art, film, history and cultural and natural heritage.'

1st Edition of
Communist Manifesto
© British Library Board



“The IROs have a unique role in bringing high-quality arts and humanities research to a wider public.”

Benefits for visitors

For visitors to museums, galleries or historic sites (either in person or via the web), the high value accorded to research makes for sharper insights and better-tested knowledge. Research enables organisations to delve deeper into their collections and to bring new insights, giving greater breadth and depth to exhibitions, permanent galleries and online resources. This is something that everyone can benefit from, whether a family engaging with the online learning programmes of The National Archives, or a visitor to a special exhibition at Tate Modern.



Over a decade of investment, the AHRC has supported the IROs with almost £8.4m, leveraging close to £6m in additional funding.

From boosting tourism (page 19) to enhancing education (page 39), from strengthening community cohesion (page 43) to better understanding a major archive (page 53), the IROs have had a productive and creative impact, enriching all of our lives.

www.ahrc.ac.uk/funding/research/iro

The benefits of being an IRO



Face to face with the Tudors

Research at the National Portrait Gallery has helped visitors go beneath the surface in looking at the Tudor monarchs.

For the UK, the Tudors are box office favourites with large numbers of tourists visiting attractions associated with the history of the royal family. And of all the eras of British history, the Tudor period remains one of the most captivating, continuing to fascinate people at home and abroad.

No wonder, then, that a recent exhibition of Tudor portraiture proved so popular. The National Portrait Gallery show *The Real Tudors: Kings and Queens Rediscovered* had over 200,000 visitors. Transferring to the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris, it was by seen by a further 120,000 people.

Left: Elizabeth I by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, c. 1592
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Below: Henry VII, unknown Flemish Artist, 1505. © National Portrait Gallery, London



What lies beneath?

The Real Tudors, the most comprehensive selection of portraits of Tudor monarchs ever brought together, has led to a better understanding of how these paintings were produced (including the particular studios and individual artists who made them), and the subtle changes in how each monarch was represented. Research was central to the exhibition. The project *Making Art in Tudor Britain*, which underpinned the show, involved the technical analysis of more than 120 Tudor and Jacobean paintings from the Gallery's collection. This helped to develop a methodology for the application of a range of non-invasive scientific processes, from x-radiography and infra-red reflectography to dendrochronology.

This cutting-edge research into 16th century British portraits has been taken up by galleries across the world, demonstrating the impact of researchers working with new technology and understanding the science of collections in their care.

Right: King Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the Younger, circa 1536-1537. © National Portrait Gallery, London

Making sense of who we are

For the National Portrait Gallery's Head of Research, Dr Peter Funnell, the value of a show like *The Real Tudors* is about much more than just attracting tourists: 'At the National Portrait Gallery, understanding things like national identity is central to what we do. The work of the gallery helps us make sense of who we are, and where we've come from.'

There's an element too of letting people see what is ultimately theirs: 'As a national collection, we're giving the public access to what collectively belongs to them,' Dr Funnell explains.

In all of this, research is crucial. He adds, 'Just in terms of building our collection, we depend on research – knowing what something is, so we can decide whether to buy it. And certainly research feeds into our blockbuster shows. But it's vital, too, for other exhibitions that are a bit more niche – they wouldn't be done at all without the research culture and capability that we've built up.'

ACCESSORIES UNDER SCRUTINY

Some of the styles on display in Tudor portraits were explained in a project involving the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). Working with Queen Mary University of London, and museums in Sweden and Denmark, *Fashioning the Early Modern: Creativity and Innovation in Europe: 1500-1800* helped to show how fashions for certain adornments – such as wigs, ribbons, ruffs and lace – developed and spread so quickly throughout Europe in the period, while others never caught on. The project has helped to shape the V&A's new *Europe 1600-1815* galleries.





TUDOR TUTORIAL

The Making Art in Tudor Britain research project also helped develop a new learning programme, enhancing the way that schoolchildren learn about this period of history.

Visitors to the
'*Romantic Scotland*'
exhibition in Nanjing
Museum, China



Cultural exchange across the globe

International research collaboration could result in more Chinese visitors coming to Scotland

In the UK, we're used to Romantic era images of the Highlands of Scotland: the glens and mountains, with perhaps the occasional forbidding castle, which were a favourite subject of landscape painters in the 19th century. But how would those images appear to people in a country with a very different landscape tradition – say, in China? Would the Scotland of the Romantics be a place they might like to visit?

Romantic Scotland, which opened in Nanjing Museum in April 2017, features paintings from the National Galleries of Scotland along with historical photography and objects from Historic Environment Scotland, showing how artists in the 19th century saw Scotland as a wild and beautiful place. Alongside the exhibition, research will be carried out on the reactions of a Chinese audience to works in this Romantic tradition, which valued the more remote parts of Scotland so highly.

For Rebecca Bailey, Head of Education and Outreach at Historic Environment Scotland, *Romantic Scotland* will provide some vital information on a key market. 'We're the major heritage tourism provider in Scotland,' says Rebecca, 'and so getting a more sophisticated knowledge of Chinese visitors is important to us. The Romantic landscape tradition portrays Scotland as 'a place of castles and mountains: a fascinating and attractive place.' But that landscape tradition is very different from the Chinese one, with its ink paintings on scrolls by scholars. Even the fact that so many western landscapes are in oils, will a Chinese audience like that?'

Crucially for Rebecca, the show asks: 'What do these works make a Chinese audience think about Scotland? Would it make them interested in visiting? We know that Chinese people come to Scotland for our heritage, but they tend to go just to the top sites, such as Edinburgh Castle. Could they be persuaded to explore further?'



“

What do these works make a Chinese audience think about Scotland – would it make them interested in visiting?

”

Left: A View of Tantallon Castle with the Bass Rock, Alexander Nasmyth, about 1816



A TALE OF TWO CITIES

The *Romantic Scotland* show follows another at Nanjing Museum, which was also a collaboration involving Historic Environment Scotland, looking at the parallel development of the cities of Nanjing and Edinburgh. In the six months the exhibition was open, between 2013 and 2014, it received more than a million visitors.

Who goes where?

The project involves Historic Environment Scotland working with its partners at three universities: Bath, Bournemouth and Xian Jiaotong-Liverpool, to develop ways of tracking visitors and measuring their response to what they see. New techniques for showing exactly where people go in exhibitions and

exactly what they look at, will be of use to a number of UK museums and galleries.

According to Rebecca Bailey: 'This kind of research-led, international partnership simply wouldn't have happened without IRO status.'



Making connections

Through a new focus on people's experience of technology, the Science Museum is helping us engage with our scientific heritage

It had started out as an old piece of equipment: a 1925 manual telephone switchboard, one of the last of its kind in operation in the London area, and an object which had been collected by the Science Museum just as a technical specimen. But an AHRC-funded project has shown how new life can be breathed into old technology.

The Enfield Exchange project returned the switchboard temporarily to the London Borough of Enfield, where it had been in use until 1960. Oral histories were then collected from local people who had worked in the Exchange. Now back at the Science Museum, as part of the Information Age Gallery, the switchboard is accompanied by these narratives recalling what it had been like to use. In its first five weeks after opening, the display attracted more than 110,000 visitors, despite being in a relatively quiet corner of the museum.

Getting in touch

For Dr Tim Boon, Head of Research & Public History at the Science Museum, Enfield Exchange is a good example of how people can be encouraged to engage with research, by connecting it to their lived experience. 'For a science museum that shows old instruments and machines, we have to ask what makes sense to our visitors. By putting the Enfield switchboard back in its local context, we were able to get in touch with what it had meant to people and this still has a resonance. It reflects the fact that we're as much a social history museum as a repository of scientific artefacts: we're interested in the *experience* of using technology, of technological change.'

The cultural impact of research

As Dr Boon sees it, research at the Science Museum is part of a wider effort to involve people in science and its wider cultural impact, which is vital for the UK as a whole. 'We have a special place in the culture of science in this country: other than TV, we're the main place where

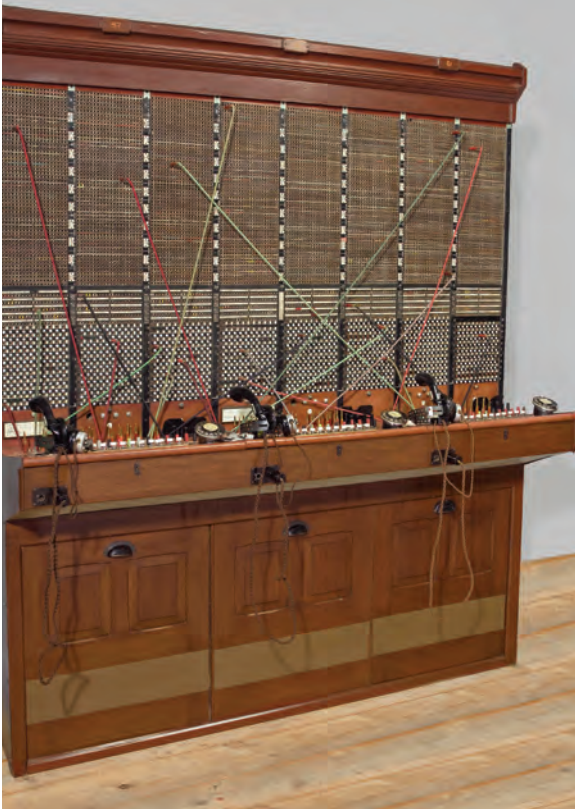
Manual Telephone
Exchange Enfield.
October 1960

Then & Now: A selection of images from the Science Museum's *'Enfield Exchange Project'* exhibition

lay people encounter science and research. Our job is to help people engage with science through the arts and humanities, allowing visitors to connect in new ways and dispel any fears they may have about it. Research helps us create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable with science.'



“
We're interested in
the *experience* of
using technology, of
technological change.
”

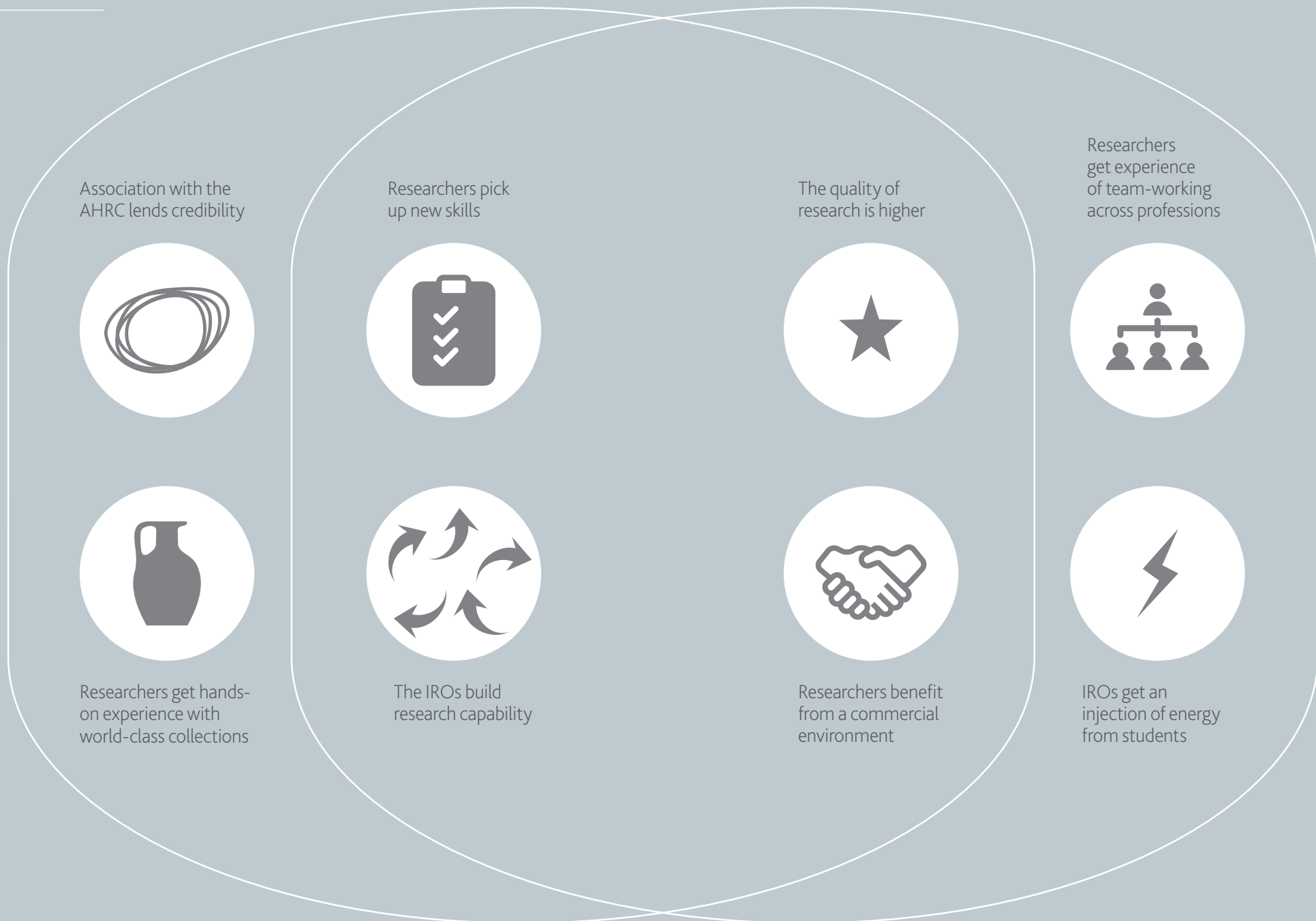




OUT OF THIS WORLD

The Science Museum's 2015 show *Cosmonauts – Birth of the Space Age* was another research-led exhibition that also showed technology in the context of lived experience. According to Dr Boon, 'It had astonishing artefacts, and located them within the cultural history of Russia, going back to the Russian Revolution. We could produce exhibitions based on the standard accounts, but shows based on novel research provide a much richer experience for visitors.'

Why collaboration benefits IROs and researchers





Making waves

Major exhibition turns a new page in the story of Japanese artist Hokusai

The British Museum is the UK's top visitor attraction and one of the blockbuster exhibitions of the summer of 2017 '*Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave*', is proving popular with the public.

The Great Wave by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai is one of the most recognisable images on the planet, loved by millions across the world. This print and Hokusai's wider work had a huge influence on artists across the world, especially the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. But few people know much about the artist, his life and how his work reflected the times he lived through. Arts and Humanities Research Council funding is helping to change this.

JD Hill, Research Manager at the British Museum, says: 'Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has allowed us to take this once-in-a-lifetime exhibition to the next level. There have been other exhibitions about Hokusai, but few that have explored his work, his times and the man himself like this. The AHRC grant has meant that we have been able to create the extra capacity to work on carefully choosing the right prints and paintings, in the right combinations and to provide a richer background to Hokusai's story.'

A team of researchers, including post-doctoral researchers, funded by the AHRC has been working on shedding new light on Hokusai's personal beliefs and his spiritual and artistic quest through major paintings, drawings, woodblock prints and illustrated books. Many of the works have never been seen before in the UK.

Timothy Clark at the British Museum and Dr Angus Lockyer, Lecturer in the Department of History at SOAS, University of London, led the overall research project, which focuses on Hokusai's last three decades, a prodigiously productive period in the artist's life.

The project has brought together expert voices from around the globe to help shape the curation of the show and identify new ways of telling the story of a world famous and very influential artist.

*Under the wave off
Kanagawa (The Great
Wave). Hokusai, 1831,
© The Trustees of the
British Museum*

Top left: Attributed to Hokusai, with frame paintings completed by Takai Kōzan (1806 -1883). *Waves*. Two ceiling panels for a festival cart, ink and colour on paulownia wood, 1845. Kanmachi Neighbourhood Council, Obuse, Nagano Prefectural Treasure. On display from 25 May – 13 August

Bottom Left: *The waterfall where Yoshitsune washed his horse in Yoshino, Yamato province from Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces*. Colour woodblock, 1833. Bequeathed by Charles Shannon RA © The Trustees of the British Museum. On display from 7 July – 13 August

Right: *Dragon in rain clouds*. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 1849. Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet, Paris, given by Nobert Lagane. On display from 25 May – 13 August



JD Hill adds, 'We want our shows to entertain and engage our visitors, helping them to interpret the art and artist in a new way. Getting this experience right takes care and real attention to detail; and the new research that we've uncovered will add exciting new layers to Hokusai's story for the thousands of people visiting the British Museum this summer.'

A similar exhibition will be held at the Abeno Harukas Art Museum in Osaka in October and November 2017.

CREATING A DIGITAL LEGACY

In the age of the smartphone and tablet it's vital that major research projects and exhibitions have a strong digital legacy, for both academics and people that love art history. AHRC funding has made it possible for curators, researchers and digital experts to work together on creating a new website that for the first time will bring together all of Hokusai's later works in one place. This will allow users to connect with art works held in different museums and galleries across the world.

The screenshot shows the British Museum website for the exhibition 'Hokusai beyond the Great Wave'. The header includes the museum's name, navigation links (Visiting, What's on, Research, Learning, Membership, Support us, About us, Blog), a search bar, and a link to the British Museum shop. The main content area features the exhibition title 'Hokusai beyond the Great Wave', the dates '25 May - 13 August 2017', and the hashtag '#Hokusai'. A large image of 'The Great Wave off Kanagawa' is displayed. Below the image, there are links for 'Book now' and 'Members free', and a note about special late opening on selected dates. The exhibition is supported by Mitsubishi Corporation. A section titled 'Experience the beautiful and sublime work of one of Japan's greatest artists.' lists five quotes from various publications, each with a star rating. At the bottom, there is a large image of 'The Great Wave' with the text 'Discover one of Japan's greatest artists' and a paragraph about Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and the exhibition's focus on his last 30 years.

The British Museum

Visiting
What's on
Research
Learning

Membership
Support us
About us
Blog

Search the website

British Museum shop

What's on > **Hokusai**
Supporters Tickets Events Schools Hokusai cinema Access

**Hokusai
beyond the
Great Wave**

25 May - 13 August 2017
Closed 5-8 July 2017

#Hokusai

Special late opening on selected dates.
Advanced booking strongly recommended

Book now > Members free >

Supported by
Mitsubishi Corporation

Experience the beautiful and sublime work of one of Japan's greatest artists.

★★★★★
'simply joyous'
Daily Mail

★★★★★
'magnificent'
The Observer

★★★★
'vivid and intimate'
The Telegraph

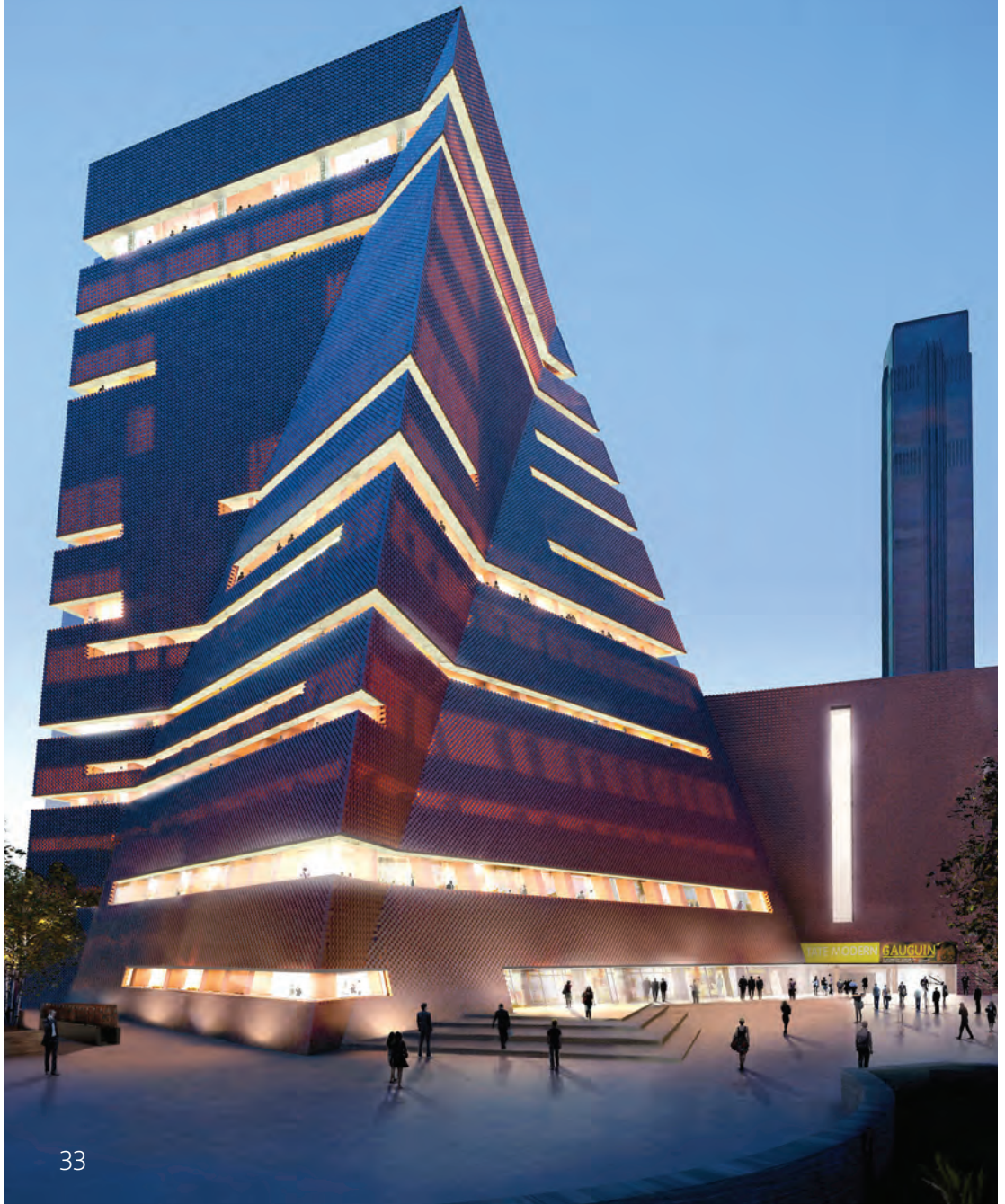
★★★★
'one of the world's most popular artists'
Evening Standard

★★★★
'entrancing'
The Times

Discover one of Japan's greatest artists

Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is widely regarded as one of Japan's most famous and influential artists. He produced works of astonishing quality right up until his death at the age of 90. This new exhibition will lead you on an artistic journey through the last 30 years of Hokusai's

Pre-build computer generated
image of Switch House.
Credit: Herzog & De Meuron



A Bigger Splash

How being an IRO has helped Tate develop ambitious projects and create a confident research culture



What difference does being an IRO make to an organisation? Take the Tate as an example: and as Research Manager Ailsa Roberts points, it's not as if research would not have happened without IRO status. 'At an institution like Tate, research is happening all the time and informs so much of what we do, from acquiring works to caring for them and staging exhibitions. It also frames how we think about learning in galleries and our broader policies.' Having IRO status, however, 'has allowed us to develop ambitious projects, collaborate with a great many academic specialists on topics of shared interest, and to be more conscious of, and exploit in more interesting ways, our research strengths.'

Research funding enables fresh thinking and innovation. Completed in 2013, *The Art of the Sublime* is one of the most popular of Tate's major online scholarly publications. The three-year project saw a multi-disciplinary investigation into the concept of the sublime, together with a major redisplay of the collection with enhanced interpretation materials, and the creation of an artwork by a leading contemporary artist.

The Gallery of Lost Art was an award-winning online immersive exhibition that told the stories of artworks that have disappeared or been destroyed. It was developed with AHRC support in collaboration with Channel 4 and a leading digital design company. More recently, the two-year AHRC project *Performance at Tate: Into the Space of Art* enabled Tate, working with a university partner, to research the little-known history of its long engagement with performance art, drawing on previously unpublished material in its archives.



A strong research culture is fundamental to our mission.



IRO status has also strengthened Tate's identity as a research-led organisation and enabled the creation of new management structures and posts with special responsibilities for research. A research department was established in 2007, and this was followed by the creation of a number of research centres, focused on topics where Tate had particular strengths or needs. Importantly, sharing information and insights with other IROs has helped build a much valued sense of community among the group and enabled collaboration, for example, in the training of doctoral students.

In the frame

For Ailsa Roberts, 'Being an IRO gives us credibility, and helps us to explain our role as a research organisation'. It has also helped to put Tate in the frame for funding from other sources, notably the EU. More generally, it helps Tate meet its statutory obligations. 'A strong research culture is fundamental to our mission', says Caroline Collier, Director, Partnerships and Programmes. 'It generates new knowledge and fresh thinking about the art we collect and exhibit. It helps us find new or better ways to conserve the materials and processes used in artworks, and, importantly, to investigate more fully and document the intentions of living artists. It also helps us be more effective in so many areas, not least in encouraging learning in our galleries. More generally, an open and curious mindset allows us to engage more deeply with the questions and issues that confront our audiences today.'

The Gallery of Lost Art:
An immersive, online
exhibition that told the
stories of artworks that
disappeared © Tate





SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS

For Ailsa Roberts, Tate's role in training doctoral students has led to significant benefits. 'The work of PhD students has made a massive difference to us. Look at the research that Rachel Smith, who was based at the University of York and Tate, carried out on modern art in St Ives, which played a really important role into our exhibition *International Exchanges: Modern Art and St Ives 1915–1965*. Rachel is now an Assistant Curator at Tate Britain and her time as a doctoral student proved to be invaluable in giving her that all important insider knowledge.'



One of the British
Library's Magna
Carta manuscripts
being prepared for
anniversary display
in the Library's
Conservation Centre



The meaning of Magna Carta

A British Library exhibition looked at the legacy of one of the world's most influential documents

Magna Carta has a pre-eminent status in our island story and beyond. Pressed on a reluctant King John in 1215, the document is seen by many around the world as a pioneering defence of individual liberties, a counter to arbitrary and tyrannical rulers, and a foundation of democracy.

To mark Magna Carta's 800th anniversary in 2015, the British Library exhibition *Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy* looked afresh at this remarkable text. The show, which featured two of the four original Magna Carta documents, attracted more than 125,000 visitors, making it the best-attended paying exhibition the British Library has ever put on.

Lead curator Claire Breay says, 'The exhibition was about helping people understand how a failed medieval peace treaty became one of the world's most powerful symbols of rights and justice.' This was a show underpinned by AHRC-funded research, which included popular videos, where researchers spoke directly to visitors interpreting the meaning of Magna Carta.



It's a kind of cultural diplomacy, reflecting our role as part of a global community.



The videos made for the show are now used in a new room devoted to Magna Carta in the British Library's Sir John Ritblat Treasures Gallery. A further enduring legacy of the exhibition is its online education programme, which helps students understand the history of Magna Carta and its importance for the Citizenship curriculum.

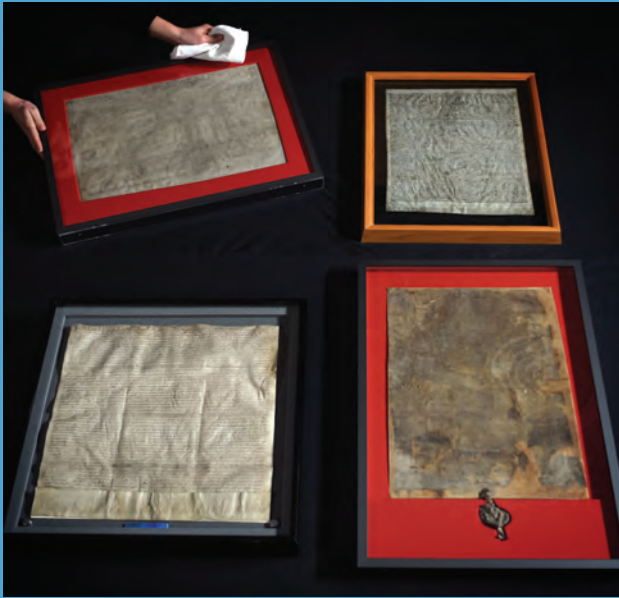
Access all areas

Dr Allan Sudlow, the British Library's Head of Research Development, believes that an important part of the Library's work involves international collaboration, as it opens up its collections to a global audience. He says: '*The Two Centuries of Indian Print* project, supported by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as well as the AHRC, through the Newton Fund, is a great example of this. We're working with partner institutions in the UK and India to share knowledge and skills, helping to stimulate digital scholarship and build research capacity, as well as providing online access to a treasure trove of Bengali books covering two centuries. This is about engaging with the

parts of the world whose cultures are represented strongly in the Library's collections: it's a kind of cultural diplomacy, reflecting our role as part of a global community.'

Six Jain saints from a Jain doctrinal text, Jaina Dharma Siddhanta





ONE, TWO, BUCKLE MY SHOE

The research project *Children's Playground Games and Songs* in the New Media Age, involved working with primary schools based in London and Sheffield. It led to the creation of a new digital archive and interactive website for the British Library's Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs, and looked at the change in children's games since the 1950s. For project leader Andrew Burn of the UCL Institute of Education, 'children's playground games are of interest to everyone – everyone remembers the games they played.'



Top: Bringing together the four original 1215 Magna Carta documents held at the British Library, Lincoln Cathedral and Salisbury Cathedral, February 2015

Bottom: King John hunting (BL, Cotton MS Claudius D ii, f. 116r)



Water bottle made
of Chinese porcelain
containing Zamzam
water, 19th Century



Building bridges

How the British Museum improves relations between communities at home and abroad

‘It’s something that we hadn’t attempted before,’ says JD Hill, Research Manager at the British Museum. ‘*Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*’ was the first major exhibition dedicated to the pilgrimage to Mecca. ‘It was intellectually demanding to present such a theme, because it dealt with Hajj. It is a central aspect of Islam, but one that non-Muslims cannot see or participate in.’

‘This was an important show to do, to help increase understanding of Islam – there was an important community cohesion aspect to it.’

Together with the University of Leeds, the British Museum had carried out new research on experiences of the Hajj reported by many British Muslims. Dozens of these testimonies then became part of the exhibition, giving Muslim visitors a new way to exchange ideas about pilgrimage and helping thousands of non-Muslim visitors learn about the faith and history of one of the UK’s major religious communities. ‘*Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*’ attracted some 140,000 visitors over 12 weeks in 2012. It then went on a successful tour to Paris, Doha and Leiden.

A sustained engagement

For JD Hill, the point about the Hajj show is that it emerged from research that had been supported by the AHRC over some

“

So much AHRC-funded research gets distilled or synthesised through IRO exhibitions.

”

considerable time under its flagship, multi-disciplinary Religion and Society theme. 'So much AHRC-funded research gets distilled or synthesised through IRO exhibitions,' he says. 'It's a way of drawing on the existing research base, but bringing it to a much wider public.'

Partly, this is simply a question of the reach that the IROs have, but that many universities don't. JD Hill explains, 'Compare what we do with other academic research projects. We might expect ten percent of visitors to buy the book that accompanies an exhibition: for a major show, that works out at more than 10,000 copies. That is really impressive for a serious, scholarly publication.'

PROJECTING THE UK'S CULTURAL INFLUENCE AROUND THE WORLD

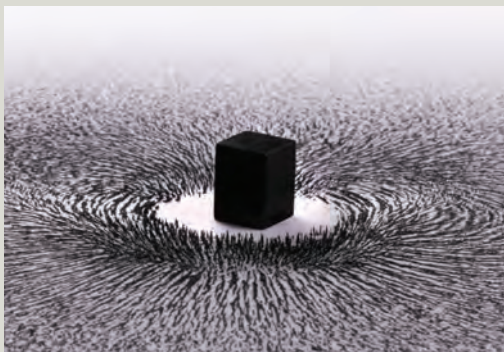
As well as strengthening community cohesion, British Museum exhibitions can play an important role in deepening relations with countries around the world. Take the '*Shah Abbas: the Remaking of Iran*' show from 2009, which looked at Iran during the Safavid period, and which featured many objects lent from Iranian collections. For JD Hill, 'Again, this exhibition helped to build bridges, and improve understanding at a time when relations between our two countries weren't good. And this was a show which also depended on the quality and scale of the research underpinning it, as well as on our long history of collaboration with Iranian colleagues.'



Left: Ivory sundial and Qibla pointer, made by Bayram b. Ilyas. Turkey, 1582-3 © The Trustees of the British Museum

Right: Magnetism. Ahmed Mater (b. 1979). Photogravure etching, 2011 © Ahmed Mater and the Trustees of the British Museum

Bottom: Voided silk-velvet textile fragment, Iran, first quarter of the 17th century, from the Qum section © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin. Photo: Hans-Joachim Bartsch



Hampton Court Palace,
Great Hall – view from
Minstrel's Gallery ©
Historic Royal Palaces



History at our fingertips

For a recent addition to the Independent Research Organisations, gaining this status has been a big step forward

In August 2015, Historic Royal Palaces, which looks after some of the most significant historic buildings across Britain, became an IRO. For Head of Research Wendy Hitchmough, 'This is a huge milestone for us. We have a thousand years of history at our fingertips and some exciting ideas for new research projects in mind. Our IRO status is about us raising our ambition: we know the projects that we want to work on and we're looking at how academic collaboration can help with that.'

But getting IRO status did not come out of the blue: it was in recognition of several major research projects that Historic Royal Palaces had already been involved with, which saw them exploring new ways of interpreting heritage spaces.

For example '*Staging the Henrician Court*' was part of a series of events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the succession of Henry VIII in 1509 for which a performance of John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* was staged in the Great Hall at Hampton Court.

Wendy Hitchmough says, 'The idea was to use performance as a research methodology. The Great Hall at Hampton Court is somewhere that we know plays were staged for the Tudor monarchs – in fact it is one of only two extant spaces where we know that Shakespeare's company performed in his lifetime. By putting on the play, we were able to investigate how the Tudor Hall operated as a theatre space, as well as a ceremonial and symbolic space, and how it

“

IRO status is about us raising our ambition.

”

was managed: it's not until you stage a play on its original site that you understand this.'

Stepping back

Another piece of site-specific performance-as-research involved a historically informed staging of Ben Jonson's 1622 *Masque of Augurs*, in the Banqueting House, Whitehall. 'We knew that the Masque had been put on there, in a production designed by Inigo Jones, who also designed the building,' Wendy Hitchmough explains. 'But what we found in staging it was that the acoustics proved to be near impossible, unless the lines were sung: it's changed our understanding of how the lines in a masque were delivered. In the same way, you can map the masque onto its actual performance space, which tells you a lot about the choreography: in the original performance, the future King Charles I was one of the dancers.'



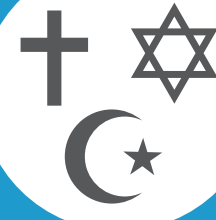


ASEA OF RED

2014 saw Historic Royal Palaces stage the internationally renowned *'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red'* display of thousands of ceramic poppies spilling into the moat at the Tower of London. To accompany the display, which was seen by more than five million people, Historic Royal Palaces worked with university academics to develop the 'Why Remember?' learning programme, helping online visitors understand the significance of the First World War centenary.

IROs engage better with the public

More opportunity to exchange stories with the community



Encourage understanding of diverse cultures

Engaging in dialogue with the audience enriches research



A ready-made platform for engaging with a wider public

Bring fresh ideas to the process



Engage with stakeholders in the community





Listening to the world

Research on the history of the BBC Monitoring Service has highlighted to the academic community the research value of the vast collection of transcripts produced by the Service, now housed at the BBC Written Archives, Caversham in Berkshire.

The BBC Monitoring Service was established in 1939 and played a key role throughout the Second World War and Cold War era by providing the BBC, as well as the government, with information about what was being broadcast on the airwaves by countries across the world. The resulting collection consists of boxes containing 15 million pages of transcripts – wafer-thin sheets of close-spaced type – enough to fill 1,500 metres of shelving.

Imperial War Museums (IWM) led a network that investigated the academic value of the collection, the first major initiative to investigate this vast and largely unexplored asset. Academics from Germany, Poland, the USA, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and India came together to discuss its value.

As IWM's Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, Suzanne Bardgett, points out, 'This is a major collection of international importance. Our project was about ascertaining the value of the collection for researchers, ensuring that the collection is recognised as an important part of British heritage, and exploring how digitisation might transform it for historians.'

From 2015 to early 2016 the network held five workshops, bringing together current and former BBC Monitoring staff, users of the service

“
**This research has highlighted
the importance of a major
under-explored archive.**
”

– including diplomats, government specialists and journalists – and international academics.

'I finished today thinking that this is one of the treasures of the world and a global resource deserves global recognition. Any citizen of the world can find something relevant to them in this material. This is a history of the world speaking to the world. ...It's an amazing, amazing resource. It's as versatile as the person who asks it questions.'

Nick Cull, Professor of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California

WITHIN THESE WALLS

Dr Elizabeth Oliver is one of many researchers who have carried out their doctoral training with Imperial War Museums as a co-supervising partner. Working with the IWM on the life-writing of British Prisoners of War working on the Sumatra Railway during the Second World War, she had access to much more than a university alone could offer: 'I've been able to draw on the expertise of researchers, curators and oral historians within the IWM.'



Above: POWs liberated from Sumatra, September 1945, IWM HU 69972

Right: Professor Jo Fox at the BBC Monitoring Second World War workshop





Where next?

Research funding and the decade ahead

At the heart of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Royal Charter is the mission to support world-class research in universities and beyond. The partnership with the Independent Research Organisations (IROs) perfectly captures the importance of research undertaken beyond the academy in and with the UK's major cultural institutions.

A decade of funding for the IROs is a chance to reflect on all that has been achieved and to plan for the next ten years. From 2016 IROs were eligible to lead funding applications to all of the Research Councils. With the creation of UK Research and Innovation in April 2018, collaborations across different research disciplines will become even more important, and their potential can be realised with the help of the IROs.

By nurturing the next generation of researchers, working with and within these institutions, AHRC funding will help to ensure that they remain the envy of the world. This will create a pool of highly trained and motivated early career researchers across academic disciplines. The Collaborative Doctoral Partnership provides doctoral students with the chance to work across universities and IROs, allowing them to develop a wide range of skills. This includes the opportunity to gain experience by working with curators, public engagement teams and digital communicators, strengthening their skills and encouraging them to think anew about the way they engage with research and relay it to a broader audience.

Ongoing AHRC funding will help build and develop the research infrastructure nationally and internationally. It will help research to flourish within UK museums, galleries and cultural organisations, positioning them as world leaders in many disciplines. Importantly, this funding has created the space for risk-taking and allowed IROs to think carefully about their strategic direction. Over the next decade

the AHRC anticipates exciting new partnerships and innovative collaborations through funding opportunities such as the Global Challenges Research Fund and the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council and IROs will work together to realise the AHRC's ambitions for the creative economy, design and cultural heritage. The IROs are especially well placed to work together and to take a lead in these areas, developing knowledge and research capacity.

The growth of new digital technology is transforming visitor experiences. In the next decade the IROs and the AHRC will work collaboratively on large-scale digital projects that maximise the potential of technology to enhance these visitor experiences, showcasing the UK as a world-leader in digital futures.

'I'm so proud of the curiosity driven AHRC funded research carried out by researchers at cultural and heritage organisations over the last decade. The possibilities of where this partnership will take us in the years ahead is really exciting and will play an important part in keeping the UK as one of the best places in the world to carry out research.'

Sir Drummond Bone, Chairman of the AHRC





Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Published by the Arts and Humanities Research Council
Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1FL
www.ahrc.ac.uk

© Arts and Humanities Research Council 2017

First published in Great Britain in June 2017 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without
the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN – 978-0-9571108-6-1

Printed by JRS