

The Socio-cultural Impacts of Museums on the Local Community

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Reasons for Studentship

- This studentship sets to **investigate, capture and analyse** the range of **socio-cultural** impacts generated by the RAMM in the period immediately after its **re-opening**
- **Drivers:**
 - Highlight the socio-cultural
 - Contribution to knowledge
 - Empirical study
 - Practical use



Royal Albert Memorial Museum

- 1868 Devon and Exeter Albert Memorial by Stafford Northcote
- 1899 became 'Royal'
- 1.5 million objects plus
- Mixed collection
- 250,000 visitors per year pre-closure of building
- Part of SW Renaissance Hub
- Exeter City Council museum
- C. 80 staff > 30 funded by ECC and > 30 funded by Renaissance



Royal Albert Memorial Museum



- ECC Objectives include:
 - Prosperous city
 - Learning city
 - Cultural and fun place to be
- Exeter's Cultural Strategy ECC
 - Establish a cultural quarter
 - Increase access to sporting and recreational facilities
- Exeter Vision Group, strategic partnership
 - Use major new opportunities like the re- opening of the RAMM and the new university building to create an Exeter culturalbrand.

Royal Albert Memorial Museum

- The Ark completed 2008
- £24million refurbishment
- Mainly HLF and Exeter City Council funded
- Closed December 2007
- Due to open in December 2011
- Theme of Home to a Million Thoughts
- Newly modelled galleries, better access, more capacity for learning programmes, more objects on display
- Out and About



Project's Objectives

Review the range of preferred **indicators of socio-cultural impact** and their reasons for selection



Develop a deeper understanding of the **academic and practical issues** surrounding the examination of socio-cultural impacts



Examine the extent to which **existing ideas and experiences of impact assessment may be transferred to museums and galleries**



Develop a **strategy to capture the socio-cultural impacts** of the reopening of RAMM in 2011



To **analyse the findings** and to learn the early lessons of the socio-cultural impacts



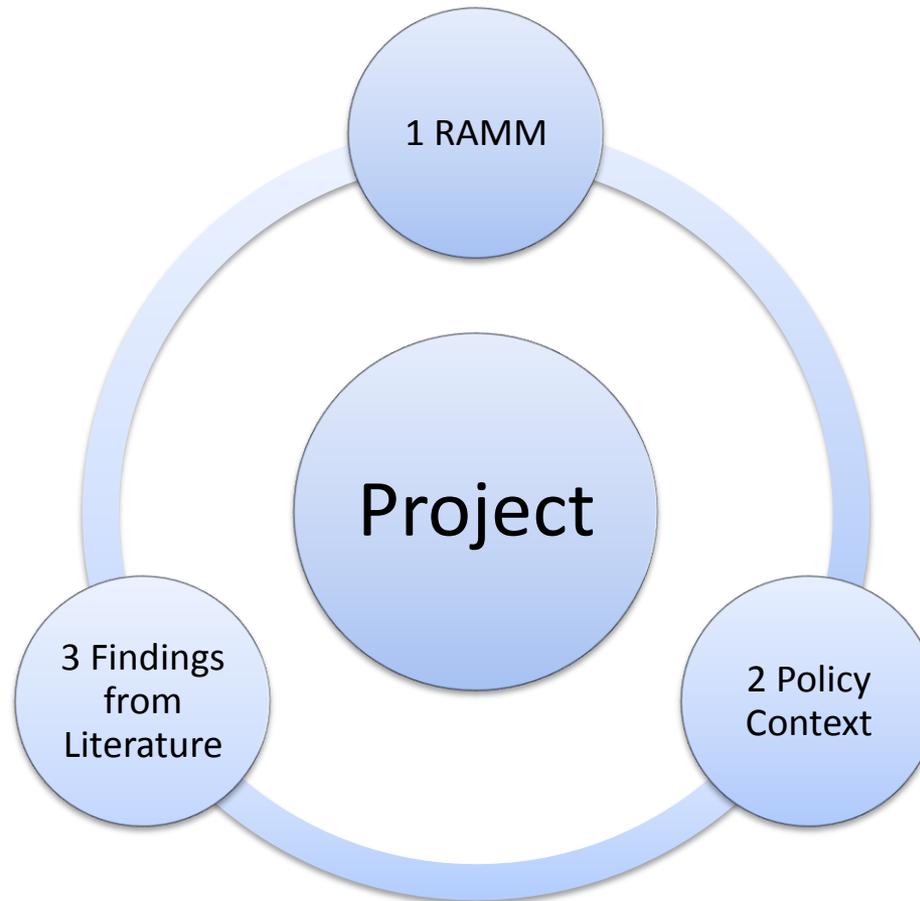
To develop a **toolkit and best practice guide.**

The Impact Impetus

- Weil (2000)

As museums have increasingly sought to measure the impact of their exhibitions and other public programs, the question of impact has turned out to be far more complex than first imagined.'
- **Why?**
 - Public Management, value for money, linking aims and objectives to outcomes
 - Proving the impact of the sector, advocacy
 - Learn from research
- **Linking what they do to the objectives of others**
 - Local Government Development Agency 2011 toolkit
 - contribution culture and sport makes to policy themes e.g. older people, health and wellbeing or the economy
 - National Indicators
 - GLOs and GSOs
- **Buzzwords**- Social Inclusion, Regeneration, Cultural Industries, Big Society

Considerations for the Project



1. RAMM

- Mission:

Exists to enable people to **explore their past and present for inspiration, learning and enjoyment**. The collections document the natural and cultural history of the city within a regional, national and international context, helping people to develop **an appreciation and understanding of their wider as well as immediate environment**. The service manages and cares for these collections that are **held in trust for the benefit of present and future generations**. (RAMM website)

- Redevelopment:

a dynamic twenty-first century museum...interprets the past, enriches the present and responds to the future...provides visitors with a comfortable social space and to engage in dialogue with the collection and with each other. (RAMM website)

- **A museum for everyone**

2. National Policy Context

- DCMS
 - DS01 Opportunity
 - DSO2 Excellence
 - DS03 Economic Impact
 - DS04 Olympics and Sport for Young People
- CASE Project
 - Database (c. 250 related to museum impacts, 7 of high research quality)
 - Drivers of Engagement- statistical analysis of Taking Part Survey
 - Impact of Engagement – learning impacts on young people
 - Value of Engagement- SWB study and health gains associated with sport
 - O’Brien 2010 recommend DCMS develop guidelines for WTP as method for developing a way of measuring non-market goods which is linked to the Green Book

2. MLA and Renaissance

- MLA
 - To enable museums, libraries and archives to provide more and more people in England with **high quality experiences that enrich their lives** (MLA website)
 - Accreditation, Designation Scheme, Portable Antiquities Scheme
- Renaissance
 - To revitalise regional museums in England so that they could play a full part **towards providing education, learning, access, Social Inclusion, improvements to regional life and modernisation of public services** (Renaissance in the Regions 2001)
 - 2002-2010 £300m (c. 80% of MLA budget)
 - 9 Regional Hub model to Core model
 - Data collection
 - Abolishment of MLA due April 2012, ACE will take over functions

3. Techniques for Evidencing Social Impact

- **Qualitative** data only
 - Open Museum 2001
 - The project has made me realise I have potential and other people think I have potential, whereas I thought it didn't matter to anybody. Before it didn't matter if you lived or died
- **Social Audit**
 - Wavell et al. 2002
 - Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield 2002, SW
- **SROI**
 - BOP Consulting 2009, libraries
 - MB Associates 2011, MEAL at Museum of East Anglican Life
- **Contingent Valuation**
 - David Throsby
 - Jura Consultants 2005

3. Trends

- **Economic impact** reports
- Studies into **social benefit**
 - RCMG, vehicles for broad social change
- Reports trying to evidence that **value for money** as social impacts have saved money in other areas e.g. social security payments
- Focus on **Subjective Well Being**
- Literature on museums as **restorative environments**
 - Packer and Bond 2010 relax and recover from the tension of everyday life
- **Learning** impacts
- Talk of **cultural and social capitals**
- **Cultural impact** through: aesthetic experience, spiritual significance, symbolic meaning, historic significance, authenticity, integrity, uniqueness,
- **Use and non-use values**, having an impact on the whole community which is seen as important

3. Problems with Existing Research

- Sarah Selwood, François Matarrasso
- **Bias**
- **Use**
 - Generalise
- **Lack of clarity**
 - methodology not fully explained
 - Sample sizes not disclosed
 - Questionnaires used not included
 - No raw data available



Challenges related to evidencing impact of a museum

- **Epistemological,**
 - ‘impact’, ‘community’ etc.
- **Objections on principle**
 - Evaluation seen as invasive, time consuming or counter to creativity
 - The impact of the arts is intrinsic and private
- **Methodological**
 - how to measure or judge impact
- **Type of impact**
 - Sector debate about impacts museums should aspire to have
 - Long or short-term
 - Outputs versus outcomes
- **Causal links**



Challenges Specific to this Project

- Museum **opening time** frame changed since project commenced
- Museum's impact may be affected by **budget cuts**
- Changing **political and policy context**
 - MLA to be abolished
 - ACE has different outlook
 - Renaissance 'Core' model to be adopted
- **Focus on the whole museum**, not a specific programme or exhibitions
 - Considering the impact of people with various experiences of the museum



Strategy to Capture Socio-cultural Impacts of RAMM



- Define the **community**
- Concentrate on **broad reach**
- Trying to show latent constructs
 - Statements related to potential impacts e.g. learning and knowledge, well-being, identity
- Focus on **users and non-users**
 - Use value
 - Non-use value
 - Option, Bequest, Existence values
 - **CVM**, WTP
- **Quantitative and Qualitative**
 - Large scale surveys
 - In-depth interviews
- **Pre-opening and post-opening**

Data Collection Timeframe

June/ July 2011

Interviews with staff and stakeholders

September/October 2011

Collection of 1st round of community data

January/ February 2012

Collection of 2nd round of community data

April/May 2012

Interviews with community members





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