

The Tomorrow People: Entry to the museum workforce

Report to the Museums Association and the University of East Anglia

Maurice Davies

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Note: This report represents the results of an investigation undertaken by Maurice Davies. It is a piece of personal work and should not be taken to be the view of the Museums Association.

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Maurice Davies
Museums Association
24 Calvin St
London E1 6NW

maurice@museumsassociation.org

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- Should I take a museum-studies course?
- How to thrive

Foreword

When Maurice Davies took up a Research Fellowship in the School of World Art Studies and Museology at the University of East Anglia in the autumn of 2005, neither we nor the Museums Association had any clear preconceptions as to what his findings might be. What we began fairly soon to sense, though, was that in spite of the proliferation of postgraduate training programmes, there was clear evidence that many people were entering and progressing through the sector without ever having felt the need to acquire a museum-studies - or indeed any other sector-specific – qualification and, furthermore, that there may be no necessary correlation between having a post-grad degree and either securing an entry-level post or flourishing in, and contributing to, museums in the longer term.

With the invaluable support of Mark Taylor at the MA, Tony Hall, Victoria Pirie and Tom Bewick at Creative and Cultural Skills, and the University of East Anglia we invited a representative cross-section of employers to a symposium to discuss their recent entry-level staffing needs and recruitment experiences. To this broadly anecdotal evidence, Maurice then added the core findings of his research, with the intention of producing a report which might be of value and use both to those of us who prepare people for museum careers and first employ them and to those many potential entrants who make extraordinary personal and financial sacrifices in order to join us!

Those of us who run MA programmes can all point to high demand for places on our courses and to equally high levels of success in placing our graduates – and all of us feel that we maintain creative and close links with the sector and are providing high-quality academic and vocational training which is relevant not only within the UK but to our increasing numbers of overseas students. But are we providing employers with entrants whom they consider employable *because* they have post-grad qualifications, or because both prior to and as part of their degree they are required to gain practical museum experience, or simply because they're lively, intelligent people who clearly 'have something to offer' in the first place? And what happens to new entrants once that first, often short-term job comes to an end?

This report doesn't pretend to have straightforward answers to these questions, nor does it judge entry-level training. Rather, the research offers an up-to-date snapshot of the landscape of entry-level and early employment and, perhaps most helpfully, highlights the vital importance of employers and trainers assuming a more consistently integrated and equally shared responsibility for the future health of the sector. We hope that the report will be a stimulus to action and to the ongoing debate about how, together, trainers, museums and supporting organisations such as the MA might best develop and value the commitment, skills and dynamism of The Tomorrow People.

Nichola Johnson
Director, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia

1 Introduction, summary and possible actions

1.1 Entry to the museum workforce is becoming a topic of increasing discussion. There are claims that there are too many museum-studies students, concerns about low pay, worries about workforce diversity and fears that staff are not progressing. There are too many applicants for some jobs and barely any for others.

1.2 Drawing on the views and experiences of museum managers, job hunters, young professionals, policy makers and university lecturers, this report explores all of these issues. It has a particular focus on the role of museum-studies courses, but in the context that museums are neglecting their responsibility to train and develop the workforce at entry-level.

1.3 This report has been undertaken with the help of the Museums Association (my employer) and a visiting fellowship from the University of East Anglia. Without their intellectual and financial support it would not have been possible. Many people have contributed, notably at a symposium for employers, hosted by UEA and funded by Creative and Cultural Skills, and in response to calls for information and a limited consultation. The 100+ people who have contributed are listed on pp58-61. I am grateful to them all; their comments and responses have developed my thinking, enriched my analysis and challenged my assumptions. I hope that I have done justice to people's views in this report. Some are quoted verbatim in appendix 2.

1.4 The conclusions here are my own. Taking account of other people's views has not been too hard as, with few exceptions, there has been a strong consensus that aspects of entry-level training and recruitment could be improved and that change is desirable. The great majority of participants in the employers' seminar and respondents to the limited consultation agreed with all the following key findings and recommendations.

1.5 My key finding is that **employers are usually delighted with the quality of people they are able to appoint to entry-level posts**, especially as salaries are so low. However, I have identified five problems.

Five problems

- **Problem 1** There is little diversity among entrants to the museum workforce. Museums want more people from minority-ethnic backgrounds, more people from poorer backgrounds, more disabled people – and more men. However, **too few attempts are being made to increase diversity. Many potential applicants are deterred** by the current approach to entry which favours people with voluntary experience who are often over qualified.
- **Problem 2** There are also some areas of shortage at entry-level – for example, people with expertise in natural science and technology and,

in some areas, education and learning staff. **The museum sector has no effective mechanisms to tackle skills shortages.**

- **Problem 3** Many individuals have an extremely difficult time securing their first reasonable museum job. **Much time, energy and talent is wasted.**
- **Problem 4** University-based museum-studies courses play a large role in pre-entry and entry-level training but **museums are unsure of the value of museum-studies courses and do not give them much support.**
- **Problem 5** Although there are many applicants for entry-level jobs, museums often find it hard to recruit for junior and middle-management posts. **Museums do not do enough to nurture and develop new recruits to prepare them to take on more responsibility.**

1.6 Addressing these five problems will require a fundamental change in approach. The overall, and perhaps rather obvious, conclusion is that all organisations involved need to take more responsibility. **Individual museums, and sector bodies, need to take far more responsibility for training and development** of staff at entry-level and in their first few years in post. In addition, **university museum-studies courses need to take more responsibility** for their overall impact on the museum workforce. This conclusion leads to six recommendations.

Six recommendations

- **Recommendation 1** Museums should provide high-quality volunteering, work-experience and internships for a wide range of people interested in a museum career.
- **Recommendation 2** There should be a widening of entry routes with employers supporting more traineeships, apprenticeships and internal progression of staff.
- **Recommendation 3** Far greater efforts need to be made to diversify the museum workforce.
- **Recommendation 4** As well as considering the needs of individual students, museum-studies courses need to take greater, more strategic responsibility for their impact on the museum workforce as a whole. Increased cooperation between museums and courses would bring benefits for students, museums and universities.
- **Recommendation 5** There needs to be better training and development for new entrants, including those on short-term contracts.
- **Recommendation 6** The AMA could play a bigger role.

1.7 The report sets out many actions, summarised below, that could be taken to implement these recommendations, but does not prioritise them. During 2007/8 the Museums Association (MA) will refine the recommendations and determine which actions are likely to have the greatest chance of success. The results will be published in a report and prioritised action plan in 2008. The MA will then work with other organisations to encourage improvements to entry-level recruitment and training.

1.8 In the meantime, the report sets out many things that museums, museum-studies courses and sector organisations could get on with (and that some are doing already).

1.9 The report also includes advice for individuals who are considering a career in museums, are considering a museum-studies course or are already in an entry-level job and wanting to progress. I hope this advice is useful and helps to bring some sense to a confusing, even chaotic, situation. See in particular appendix 3, which includes guidance on:

- Getting a first job
- Should I take a museum-studies course?
- How to thrive in the first few years of a museum career

1.10 Most of the problems identified here would not exist if more museums were proper learning organisations, committed to recruiting and developing their staff properly. The underlying message of the report is that museums would be better if they took staff recruitment and development more seriously. Too often museums rely on their staff to organise their own training and development. Continuing Professional Development and self-directed learning are good things, but employers have an overriding responsibility to develop their staff.

1.11 Improvements to the current unplanned approach to entry will make things better for job-seekers, of course, and also for museums - and the museum-studies courses that play such a big part in entry-level training. Most importantly they would help make museums more effective at using their collections and relating to audiences.

1.12 Many of the improvements suggested would have no, or relatively low, extra cost (although a few would need significant funding). To improve things, something of a change in attitudes will be needed. Sector organisations, including the Museums Association and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, play only a very small role in entry to the workforce. They will have to play a part if things are to improve, as will Creative and Cultural Skills and university museum-studies courses. Most importantly each museum will need to recognise the enhanced role it could play in entry-level training and development and think more about the needs of the museum-sector workforce as a whole, in addition to its own immediate needs.

Defining 'entry-level' jobs

1.10 Defining entry-level jobs has been difficult. In many museums, junior learning or curatorial posts are held by people doing their first paid work in a museum. This is particularly true of short-term contract posts. In others the most junior curatorial posts require several years' prior experience. Often, posts that are on paper suitable as a first museum job are in fact taken up by people with considerable experience and qualifications. (In a very few museums, employees can begin as museum assistants, in a primarily front-of-house role, and progress internally in a structured way to curatorial, learning or management roles.) I have therefore not adopted a strict definition of an entry-level post and have looked broadly at the types of job from which people tend to build careers in museums, such as museum education, curation, collections management, marketing, community/outreach work and museum management, rather than more generic areas such as IT, security, customer service, accountancy and retail. (A lack of expertise and time has made it impossible for me to investigate entry to conservation jobs.)

1.11 In general I have focused on jobs for which a degree (or postgraduate qualification) or equivalent is normally expected by employers, as recruitment to other posts tends to be more straightforward. I realise that this begs many questions, but hope my findings are useful nonetheless. I know that there are differences between different types of job (and different types of museum). In some areas, such as marketing, people are more likely to move in and out of museums than in others, such as collections management. I hope my tendency to generalise is as useful in suggesting a way forward as it is crude.

Full list of possible actions

The Museums Association will consider these possible actions in more detail to determine which have the greatest chance of improving entry to the museum workforce.

Recommendation 1 Museums should provide high-quality volunteering, work-experience and internships for a wide range of people interested in a museum career

Possible actions that could improve volunteering and pre-entry work-experience (see Section 5)

1. To properly serve the needs of different kinds of volunteers it is essential that museums recognise the fundamental difference between people who are volunteering in order to gain work-experience and those who are doing so for leisure.
2. Museums could openly advertise and recruit for all their work-experience volunteering and internship opportunities
3. Sector organisations (MA, MLA, SMC, CyMAL, NIMC, CCS, especially its forthcoming creative knowledge lab) could consider the possibility of establishing a central web-based information point to advertise volunteering, internship and other work-experience opportunities
4. Expand work-experience internships for people at different stages in education. The MLA work is aimed at schoolchildren, and Young Graduates into Museums and Galleries is aimed at 16-19 year olds, but these schemes are both very small and need expanding rapidly if they are to have a significant impact. There is also no scheme for undergraduates or for people considering a change in career.
5. Sector organisations (some sector skills councils are doing this already) could consider drawing up 'light touch' good-practice guidance and standardised models for work-experience volunteering, internships and work-experience
6. There is probably much to learn from the USA where museum work-experience seems to be well organised
7. Hubs and regional agencies could consider employing work-experience/internship coordinators to advise and support several museums. It seems feasible to aim initially at one post per region or nation
8. National museums could consider playing a role in co-ordinating opportunities in museums nationwide with the same subject specialism
9. University museums could link undergraduates seeking work-experience with the wider museum community
10. Museums could consider the potential for including work-experience opportunities in specific projects. HLF could encourage this as a way of increasing community participation in museum projects. There may be potential for the work-experience to count as in-kind match funding

Recommendation 2 There should be a widening of entry routes with employers supporting more traineeships, apprenticeships and internal progression of staff

Possible actions that could improve entry-level training and development (see Section 9)

11. All museums should have genuine entry-level positions that do not expect applicants to have previous museum experience or museum-specific qualifications and offer the opportunity to gain experience and qualifications and to progress
12. Larger museums could all be expected to have formal training programmes
13. Medium sized museums could all designate one post as a training position, possibly shared between two or three museums
14. Museums could work regionally (or nationally) to introduce training programmes. These could be employer-led partnerships that involve universities and other training providers
15. Hubs could lead generalist training programmes; nationals could lead more specialist programmes in their area
16. There may be particular benefits in regionally or nationally organised traineeships in areas of recruitment difficulty such as natural history curatorship. There may also be benefit in specific entry initiatives for education and learning and community staff, as these are areas where there is a growing demand
17. Museums should not unnecessarily inflate requirements for entry-level posts, even as a way of reducing the number of applications
18. Museums should select new entrants on the basis of their competence and potential, rather than requiring particular qualifications
19. Museums should not specify a museum-studies qualification as essential (or even desirable) unless it genuinely is
20. Museums that want entry-level staff with museum-studies qualifications should consider how they can support people to get those qualifications and also engage with appropriate museum-studies courses to influence their content and if possible assist with course development and work-experience
21. Sector bodies (MA, MLA, SMC, CyMAL, NIMC or SSC) could consider providing best-practice guidance on entry-level job descriptions, person specifications, recruitment processes and development opportunities
22. Good induction schemes would make it easier for museums to recruit people without museum-specific experience or qualifications
23. MLA and the hubs need to give careful thought to how Renaissance could in future do more to reshape entry to the workforce

Recommendation 3 Far greater efforts need to be made to diversify the museum workforce

Possible actions that could improve workforce diversity (see Section 7)

24. Museums need to have a range of entry routes, accessible to a range of people with the potential to have a successful museum career. These are likely to include apprenticeships, traineeships and foundation degrees
25. Internal progression schemes have great potential for diversifying many parts of the workforce
26. Positive-action schemes targeting particular under-represented groups will have a significant role for some time to come
27. There is work to do to promote museum careers to a wider range of potential entrants, but this needs to be supported by accessible entry routes
28. There should be open recruitment to all entry-level posts. Short-term, junior posts often lead to more reasonable work so all positions, permanent and temporary, should be advertised, Everyone should have an equal chance to access 'foot-in-the door' opportunities and they should not be automatically or informally offered to people already known to the museum
29. There may be benefits in marketing entry-level jobs (and places on museum-studies courses) to students at more diverse newer universities
30. The Museums Association could consider establishing a service to help employers target minority-ethnic applicants
31. More work needs to be done to diversify the intake of students onto university courses that supply museums. In addition to museum studies this includes history, art history, and archaeology. AHRC should take the need for positive-action into account in its funding for postgraduate students. Museum-studies courses should have their own positive-action initiatives
32. A substantial positive-action initiative, led by DCMS, could make a considerable difference. There may be benefit in an approach that covers several parts of the cultural sector
33. There is scope for more positive-action activity in Scotland and a need for action in Wales and Northern Ireland
34. National and regional targets for workforce diversification will be useful to encourage and assess progress

Recommendation 4 As well as considering the needs of individual students, museum-studies courses need to take greater, more strategic responsibility for their impact on the museum workforce as a whole. Increased cooperation between museums and courses would bring benefits for students, museums and universities

Possible actions that could improve museum-studies courses (see Section 6)

A Collaboration and partnership

35. Closer working between museum-studies courses and museums could:
 - better match course content to employer needs and tackle areas of skill shortage
 - deliver better training (including more work-based learning)
 - ensure a good balance of teaching that includes current museum staff teaching to complement university staff who bring wider perspectives
 - ensure a wide range of people with career potential are selected for courses
 - increase the impact and influence of museum-studies departments on museums
36. As a starting point each course could hold regular (perhaps twice yearly) meetings with museums, especially those it hopes will employ its students
37. Courses could consider the benefits of working together to:
 - engage with museums
 - develop course content
 - share best practice in teaching and work-experience
38. The sector would benefit if, at the least, the courses formed a museum trainers forum. Funding may be available to develop more extensive ways of collaborating

B Course structures

39. Courses could consider the benefits of gradually moving away from full-time tuition in favour of part-time/modular/distance-learning for people in museum work. Ideally some of these places would be available as part of formal partnerships with museums and include extensive work-experience. Courses could take the lead in trying to establish such partnerships (some of which could have a positive-action element to them)
40. Courses could explore other models of training, for example the system in archives and specialist libraries in which full-time students gain substantial structured paid work-experience before they start the course. Courses could take the lead in encouraging museums to establish paid pre-course training places
41. There seems to be fairly general agreement that the amount of structured work-experience organised as part of courses should be increased
42. Courses could work together and with museums to share best practice in work placements

C Data and selection of students

43. It would help applicants if courses worked together to devise a consistent method of collecting and presenting data on student employment
44. In the meantime courses should make the difficulties of gaining employment clear to applicants before they accept an offer of a place on the course. The Museums Association could consider devising a standard form of words that could be used by all recognised courses
45. When selecting students who seek a career in museums, courses need to try to be sure that they really are likely to succeed
46. Individual courses should be clear about the specific types of job they are preparing students for

D Validation/recognition

47. Following the demise of CHNTO validation, courses might take the lead on proposing a replacement scheme. The single most important criterion for a new validation/recognition scheme would be the relevance of the course to student and employer needs
48. Any replacement scheme for Museums Association recognition would probably want to address the entry-level issues as well as (or instead of) the issues of relevance to the AMA. It could assess some or all of:
 - a. Breadth of overall introduction to museums and their context
 - b. Quality of work-based learning
 - c. Success in preparing students for work
 - d. Relationships with museums
 - e. Widening participation/diversity
 - f. Clarity about the specific types of jobs the course is aimed at
 - g. Selection procedures
 - h. Information for applicants about employment difficulties
49. A replacement scheme might set out to identify a smaller number of centres of excellence, or have some kind of limit on the number of places it recognises each year

Recommendation 5 There needs to be better training and development for new entrants, including those on short-term contracts

Possible actions that could improve development in the first five years (see Section 10)

50. Museums need to actively encourage new entrants to develop. They need to help staff consider their future career and develop the skills and knowledge they need to progress. Better employers push their staff and encourage them to move on and develop their management and leadership skills
51. Museums should devise approaches to staffing that give new entrants the opportunity to experience a range of different types of museum work. In all but the smallest museums, new staff can quickly become very narrow in their experience and outlook. One approach could be for new entrants to spend one day a week in different departments, or working with a member of staff in a different area, for their first one or two years. Alternatively people could be seconded into different areas for short periods
52. Line managers need to be skilled in developing the staff that report to them. A programme of training for line managers, perhaps organised regionally or nationally, could have a significant impact
53. Medium and larger museums could introduce their own internal progression schemes to encourage and support staff progression
54. All short-term contract staff should have development opportunities to improve their career prospects. The cost of this should be built in to funding applications. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to redesignating short-term contract posts as traineeships
55. Development means much more than going on courses and there could be more secondment and mentoring opportunities
56. Some support could be provided on a regional basis; for example new entrants from several museums could meet together regularly to experience other museums, hear about museum issues and develop their skills. This could be organised by consortia of museums, hubs or regional MLAs. It might link to the AMA
57. The Museums Association could consider a scheme specifically for new entrants to provide some of the things outlined above. It might link to the AMA, perhaps a first step towards the AMA. The MA could pilot it with Diversify alumni
58. Sector bodies (MA, MLA, SMC, CyMAL, NIMC, CCS, MPG) could consider ways of advising new entrants in developing their careers, such as career development days, career management advice, etc
59. Individuals entering museum work should demand development opportunities

Recommendation 6 The AMA could play a bigger role

Possible actions that could improve the impact of the AMA (see Section 10)

60. There is not a case for a complete reinvention of the AMA. The basic framework is sound, although it could include additional criteria and might benefit from a slightly modular or two-stage approach to make it more accessible
61. Currently, everyone taking the AMA needs a qualification – either university- or NVQ-based. There might be merit in replacing this with a system in which the AMA itself assesses an applicant's knowledge and competence. There may be lessons from ICON's accreditation system. An alternative suggestion is that all AMA applicants should take an NVQ
62. Even though many people taking the AMA will not progress to leadership positions, all staff benefit from leadership (and management) skills. There should probably be an additional criterion to encourage this
63. For some potential applicants the 'starting point' for the AMA appears to be too high. To increase accessibility it would be useful to consider ways of extending the relevance of the AMA so that it can support and recognise the development of museum staff who are not (yet) working at the equivalent of NVQ level 4
64. This might also help make the AMA work better for people who enter the workforce through apprenticeship schemes and for recent entrants who are in temporary jobs
65. The main focus of the AMA should remain broadly based, although there could be an additional criterion to encourage applicants to develop in a specific area of museum work
66. There might be a role for specialist groups or SSNs in developing specific training and development in their specific area
67. Changes to the rules of the AMA could encourage more secondments so that people experience a wider range of museums and types of work
68. The Museums Association needs to be clearer about the overall purpose of the AMA, both strategically in terms of sector workforce development and in terms of the specific benefits it is intended to have for individuals and their employers
69. The AMA needs to meet employer needs (not least so that employers will support their staff in taking it)

2 The case for change

2.1 Thousands of people want to work in museums and competition for most entry-level jobs is intense. It's not unusual to get over 50 applications for a junior post. Some of these people will, of course, be unsuitable but many will have a postgraduate museum-studies qualification and a fair bit of experience. Museums are generally delighted by the quality of people they are able to appoint at entry-level, especially as salaries are so low.

2.2 However, this is not necessarily a good thing. As shown below, it makes it harder to diversify the workforce and, in the words of the West Midlands museum hub, 'the abundance of candidates for museum jobs has led to complacency within the sector about recruitment, professional development, pay and retention. While there may be plenty of candidates for museum jobs, there is growing evidence of a crisis in recruitment and leadership... and many institutions having to advertise several times over for senior jobs.'¹

2.3 At a more personal level, things are tough for job-seekers. In the course of my research I've been surprised by the number of people who have taken the trouble to send me details of their struggle to get into museum work². I heard tales of disappointment from people who had gone to considerable personal expense to spend years volunteering and take a postgraduate museum-studies qualification, yet had failed to secure a decent job. These people are a minority, but they appear to be a sizable minority and their experiences need to be considered, especially as many of them evidently feel let down, even exploited, by museums and universities. It is surely unacceptable for the sector to condone situations like this: 'I do not know how long I can realistically stay... I am 28 years old, intelligent and capable, have spent vast amounts on my education and yet am earning [£11,000] just above the minimum wage. However I am sure that if I did leave there would be many eager entry-level museum [studies masters] graduates ready to jump into the post.'³

2.4 Getting into the museum workforce has perhaps always been hard, and the competitiveness and informality of the entry 'system' is typical of much of the cultural and creative sector. Paradoxically, it appears to be getting less accessible as a result of government policies to expand higher education.⁴ Other sectors like commercial law and accountancy are of course also highly competitive to enter. As one university museum-studies lecturer commented 'attractive jobs in all sectors have always attracted large numbers of applicants'⁵.

2.5 Nevertheless, the situation in museums does seem unnecessarily disorganised and hence harsher than it need be on potential entrants, leading to comments like: 'Lack of faith in the future of my career and the sector itself, and a loss of personal confidence post-university, are factors which, after a life-long interest in the past and heritage, are prompting me (and some of my peers) to look elsewhere for employment. I thank you for undertaking this research – you will be championing the cause of a great many deflated, but

still passionate (and capable) young people.⁶ This report suggests that there is an ethical case for trying to improve things.

2.6 There is also an organisational or business case. Although the current free-market approach generates many high-quality applicants for most entry-level jobs, museums want a more diverse range of people to choose from. The current approach to training and recruitment narrows the potential workforce, deterring people from ethnic minorities and poorer backgrounds (and also discourages men). Museums also find it hard to recruit for some kinds of post.

2.7 Perhaps most alarmingly, I heard from people who feel stuck in their first job, while for their part museums reported many difficulties in recruiting to junior- and middle-management posts. This suggests that there is a significant problem with training and development of recent entrants. Museums aim to use collections in new ways and have improved relationships with their audiences. To achieve this they need to improve their approach to staff recruitment and development, particularly at entry-level.

2.8 A further business reason to try to improve things is that in order to gain work-experience many people are working voluntarily in museums or looking for work placements, for example as part of museum-studies courses. This is potentially a rich resource for museums, yet the current ad hoc approach means that many in museums see work-experience as a problem rather than an opportunity. Museums get less benefit from it than they might and work-experience volunteers can feel exploited rather than nurtured.

2.9 Changes in the way in which museums recruit and develop their entry-level staff could bring:

- Better skilled staff achieving more
- A more diverse workforce better able to represent and relate to varied audiences
- People with a wider range of skills and knowledge able to think about and communicate collections in varied ways
- Better motivated staff, forward looking and positive
- Less under-performance from frustrated staff stuck in a job that no longer interests them
- More movement between museums, leading to better sharing of best practice and easier collaboration
- A better pool of candidates for junior- and middle-management jobs
- And, ultimately, a higher standard of museum, serving the public better and more effectively

2.10 There is, it has to be said, a fair amount of complacency around. It is perfectly possible that individual museums and universities will continue as they are. Museums will probably continue to receive large numbers of good well qualified (often over qualified) applicants for their entry-level positions and, perfectly understandably, may continue to recruit them without thinking about the longer-term needs of the museum sector as a whole. Universities will probably continue to receive enough applications for their courses from

people who can afford to pay their own fees (although rising fees and growing student debt may have an adverse effect in a few years) and could perfectly easily continue to select and educate them without thinking enough about the wider impact on the museum workforce. Sector bodies could continue to leave museums and universities largely to their own devices.

2.11 However, I hope the ethical and organisational cases, which are explored in detail below, will convince many museums, museum-studies courses and sector organisations to work together to improve the ways in which people enter the museum workforce and develop in their first few years.

3 What employers want

3.1 As in other loosely structured sectors, the specific skills, knowledge and experience expected of new entrants vary from job to job and place to place. The requirements for a curator/manager in a small local museum are very different from those for an education officer, marketing assistant or junior curator in a large one. And even within the same types of museum, staff structures and responsibilities vary widely.⁷ Salaries do, too.⁸

3.2 Most important of all for most recruiters is relevant work-experience (voluntary or paid). The insistence on previous experience is problematic and discriminatory, and perhaps unnecessary, as discussed below in section 5. Essential requirements for entry-level jobs can include:

- Collections documentation experience
- Knowledge, experience and understanding of the national curriculum
- Experience of delivering face-to-face learning
- Experience to assist with the implementation of the collections management plan⁹

3.3 There are also some general qualities that employers say they look for. As Roy Clare, director of the National Maritime Museum says, new entrants need to be 'flexible, team-focused, capable, interested, bright and able to position apostrophes correctly'. A full list of employer wants can be found in box A on the next page.

Box A What employers want

Given free reign to say what they'd like new entrants to have, recruiters have high expectations.¹⁰

In addition to relevant paid or unpaid work-experience, the specialist skills and knowledge needed for the particular post and, in some cases, a postgraduate museum-studies qualification (which are the primary concerns of heads of department, who have specific things that need to be done), directors and other senior staff tend to value more generic qualities and skills, citing things such as:

- Curiosity, passion, interest and enthusiasm
- Willingness to learn and develop
- Very bright ('bright sparks' are in demand)
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Public service ethos
- Customer focus
- Tenacity
- Imagination and creativity
- 'Can do' attitude
- Confidence
- Entrepreneurship
- Courage and risk taking
- Understanding of the world of work
- Team working¹¹
- Management ability or potential (people, project and financial)
- Communication with a range of different audiences and advocacy skills
- Outward looking
- Understanding of the social and political contexts of museums
- Empathy
- Reliability and trustworthiness
- Interpersonal and political skills
- Good IT skills
- And, of course, the ability to position apostrophes correctly

For subject-specialist jobs, as well as academic achievement, people need a sensibility for objects, 'an ability to see (or believe) that an object can be used to communicate ideas',¹² which often appears to be in short supply (see section 8).

A human-resources manager commented 'these qualities and skills cannot and should not be applied as a blanket across all jobs within a museum.'¹³

3.4 These employer expectations seem unreasonably high at entry-level, especially as some of the skills listed 'can only be developed whilst working.'¹⁴ This view is supported by research into the visual-arts workforce for Arts Council England: 'Skills which come from workplace experience can only be

learned in a job or through freelance work. They therefore call for training of employees organised by the employer to suit the organisation's needs.¹⁵

3.5 One applicant commented: 'The employers seem to be asking too much for the salaries which are offered. Most jobs require an MA, a degree, relevant work-experience and detailed collections knowledge, all for £16,000 a year (or less in the case of some documentation jobs)'.¹⁶ A fairly new recruit to museums observes 'this sector is full of overqualified, underpaid workers. Without a postgraduate qualification there's a slim chance of even a £15k job. I thought that a degree was supposed to guarantee a decent salary, but even an MA no longer guarantees that in this industry. When I try to explain this to my friends who work in other sectors they refuse to believe me.'¹⁷

3.6 Many employers specify a postgraduate museum-studies qualification as essential or desirable for entry-level posts, but do nothing to support people in gaining such qualifications, with the cost falling on the individuals taking the qualification (see section 6). A further problem is that some museums, including some large ones, don't really have entry-level posts in some areas, such as curation where their most junior jobs expect several years of paid experience.¹⁸ Effectively, the bottom level of the career structure is missing and these museums are relying on people getting prior experience by working in other museums. As one job-seeker noted: 'There is ... a major problem when looking for an opening job that someone expects you to have worked professionally for a few years for a start-up job. (Why should you need a few years experience for a start-up job?) Surely... museums should introduce more training posts!'¹⁹

3.7 One hub leader commented 'the problem may not be that we are demanding too much of our entry-level candidates, but that we are unable to create true entry-level posts.' As far as curatorial posts are concerned the conventional approach is 'a career structure in the form of junior, senior and principal posts within one discipline.'²⁰ There appear to be extremely few assistant keeper posts – traditionally one of the main entry routes with development opportunities for people with potential – although some have been created with Renaissance in the Regions funding. As discussed later, there is also a case for more broadly-based traineeships, in which trainees could gain experience of a wide range of museum work, and avoid the inevitable limitations caused by early specialisation.

4 The struggle for the first job

4.1 Things are undoubtedly tough for job-seekers, who are bewildered about how to get a first museum job. A university tutor who sees many of her former postgraduate art-history students working in museums says she is 'baffled' about how people get there.²¹

4.2 Job-seekers typically (but by no means exclusively²²) have one of three types of experience. There is no data, but I think that perhaps around half of entry-level museum-specific jobs go to people who already have a postgraduate museum-studies qualification.²³ Curators in larger museums tend to enter museum employment without museum-studies qualifications, as do many people in learning and marketing.

4.3 First, those who enter without a museum-studies qualification. There are happy examples of people getting a good entry-level job, even a junior curatorial job, within a few months of completing their undergraduate degree, with some casual or voluntary work-experience - if they are lucky enough to find themselves in the right place at the right time and have what the employer is looking for. (Depending on the field, some have a postgraduate qualification in, for example, marketing or a subject specialism, or a PGCE.) Some people enter museum work directly from another sector, such as education, marketing or community work. Although these people find initial employment relatively easily, they can find progression hard as they do not always get a full induction into the museum sector, although some take a museum-studies course part-time while working, or use the AMA to build their knowledge of the sector.

4.4 The second group don't get a job quite so easily. Perhaps after spending some time volunteering and unsuccessfully job hunting, they decide that their chances of employment will be increased if they take a postgraduate museum-studies course. They do this, usually full-time if they are recent undergraduates, but sometimes part-time, particularly if they are hard up. Part-time courses often appeal to people who are trying to change careers (although some career changers take museum-studies courses full-time). Many of these people then get a job in museums soon after completing the course. A surprising number seem to experience the 'right place at the right time' and are employed by the museum where they did a work placement as part of their course, volunteered, or undertook some casual work. Others take a few months or even a year to find a job. Sometimes the day-to-day reality of the first job is below expectations and does not allow them to develop as quickly as they would like. Lucky ones move onto a better job quickly, but others don't.

4.5 The third category is the unlucky ones. After taking a museum-studies course they struggle to get any work at all. They take on more and more voluntary work, perhaps eventually getting a short-term contract post in, for example, documentation. They often end up in jobs they don't really want because they're the only ones available. When their first post comes to an end it takes them months to find anything else, and when they do it is often at a

similar level. This continues for years, until they eventually are forced to give up on museum work and try a different sector, either because no more jobs are available, or because they have reached perhaps 30 years old, have not progressed and can see no prospect of earning a living wage in museums. In the worst cases, people effectively waste up to 10 years of their life failing to get a reasonable museum job and can become extremely upset, as shown by some of the comments recorded in appendix 2.

4.6 It's quite likely that some of the people in the latter category were for some reasons never likely to have a successful museum career and that their failure was inevitable.²⁴ If so, it might be fairer on them, and reflect better on the museum sector, if there could be some way of at least attempting to help them identify this at an earlier stage, so that they could avoid such drawn out disappointment. There does seem to be something cruel in the way that museums and museum-studies courses inadvertently string people along for so long. For some people, their rejection by the museum sector comes only after they have studied and volunteered for several years. People can feel exploited and become bitter: 'I have concluded that the MA in museum studies is essentially a way of keeping those who lecture... in employment (while they essentially misrepresent your chance of employment in the profession after you finish your qualification) while providing museums with highly skilled, unpaid labourers with no concrete, long-term forms of employment.'²⁵ This is discussed further below.

4.7 The scenarios above emphasise that for many people there's a strong element of luck - being in the right place, with the right experience, at the right time. Often, entry-level jobs seem to go to people already known to the museum – typically because they are volunteering at the museum, or undertook a work placement there, perhaps as part of a museum-studies course, or are doing casual work for the museum. As discussed in section 7, some museums are introducing sophisticated internal progression schemes designed to help front-of-house and administrative staff build their skills and experience and progress to more senior posts, including learning management and curation. This looks set to increase as museums endeavour to widen entry routes and also make the best use of their existing staff. This will, of course, make it yet more competitive for new entrants to secure a first job.

4.8 However, some things do increase people's chances of gaining a reasonable job. These include varied, relevant work-experience (paid or unpaid), flexibility about the type and location of work, getting a foot in the door (or several feet in several doors) and a good museum-studies qualification. However, 'the lack of agreement between museums as to what qualifications and experience are required for different posts...means that aspiring museum workers may spend considerable time gaining skills which may not be needed'²⁶. (There is more guidance for individuals seeking a museum job in appendix 3) The next two sections look in a little more detail at the two main things potential entrants undertake: volunteering and museum-studies courses. They also begin to suggest some possible improvements.

5 Volunteering – and discrimination

5.1 Many, probably most, people who enter museum work have previously undertaken voluntary work in order to gain experience. Views on this are mixed. Well structured, supportive voluntary work, such as that offered by the Wordsworth Trust, is effectively a form of training, which may be unpaid, but at least does not charge fees! One respondent, from a strategic organisation, recognised that experience is useful to employers, but questioned whether it is necessary: 'I often feel that there is too much emphasis on experience and too little on identifying the skills that museums need in the 21st century and recruiting people who have them, or the potential to develop them. But that would require a commitment from employers to help them to do so...'²⁷

5.2 Volunteering is seen by some employers as a sign of commitment to museum work, although quite why people should have to demonstrate commitment, rather than just good skills and potential, is an interesting question. 'Doing unpaid voluntary work is seen as a necessary rite of passage to prove commitment and employability. Perpetuating this rite of passage gives an advantage to those young people whose background means that they can afford to work without being paid. It disadvantages anyone who does not have adequate resources to do this.'²⁸ As one unsuccessful job-seeker told me: 'I am angry towards a profession that claims to value social inclusion and diversity, yet discriminates against people who cannot afford financially to spend years volunteering.'²⁹

5.3 Volunteers can be misled about the museum's intentions. Someone with extensive work-experience in other sectors and a museum-studies MA, who could not get work and so volunteered warned: 'I believe that anyone offering to volunteer, with considerable skills, should be made aware that there is, *or is not*, likely to be a post at the end of their term as a volunteer. Otherwise false expectations can arise, as in my case.'³⁰

5.4 A university careers adviser commented: 'Even middle-class university students need to earn during vacations. Even publishers and media organisations offer paid internships. Students don't expect to be paid for museum internships at banking and solicitor level, but few can afford to do more than a couple of weeks unpaid, especially if it means living away from home. The money situation is worse for new graduates, who are facing the repayment of student loans/debt.'³¹ Even some parts of the art trade offer paid internships.³²

5.5 A museum-studies lecturer commented 'I think that the prevalence of volunteering... is quite reprehensible but can't see a way out of it at present.'³³ One job-seeker bitterly described work-experience volunteering as 'an appalling and blatant exploitation of people's goodwill and hopes... and I say that as a tolerably contented volunteer myself... That museum work has become some kind of hobby for married people with spouses in better paid work is simply not good enough... volunteers must also hang by their fingertips from the edge of the profession... Decently paid internships should be openly available in place of voluntary work.'³⁴ Research into entrants into

the visual arts workforce has talked of an 'in-built readiness for self-exploitation.'³⁵ A museum-studies course leader admitted: 'It's a constant puzzle to me why people are so keen to work in museums and pay for MAs when the pay's so low... They do let themselves be exploited!'³⁶

5.6 Many museums are overwhelmed with applications from people who want to volunteer in order to gain work-experience. In many cases getting good voluntary experience needs contacts – this inevitably favours people who have similar middle-class backgrounds to current staff.³⁷ This afflicts many popular careers.³⁸

5.7 Another difficulty for people seeking work-experience, is that museums do not necessarily distinguish between them and more 'general' volunteers, who volunteer because of their love of the museum's subject, or because they want to make a contribution to society. Different types of volunteers have rather different needs and expectations. As Kirsten Holmes has observed, most young people volunteer not for simple enjoyment or leisure, but because they appear to have little chance of being shortlisted for a job without doing so.³⁹

5.8 The quality of work-experience volunteering is very variable. At the recently reopened Roundhouse in Camden there is a commitment to quality work-experience: 'It is important that all individuals seeking work placements at the Roundhouse are interviewed and that mutually agreed conditions are laid out. Formal supervision, personal feedback and mentoring from industry professionals must all form part of the experience.'⁴⁰ Museum work-experience is not often so professionally organised. In UK museums 'a good internship is almost entirely due to luck and finding a mentor.' In contrast, 'in the US many museums offer structured internships... [which] sometimes have a stipend attached to them but are often unpaid. These ... structured internships are rare in the UK.'⁴¹

5.9 Encouragingly, many respondents from museums feel it is desirable to offer high quality, equitable, openly advertised volunteering opportunities. Ideally museums would introduce more structured, perhaps even paid, work-experience and internships for people at a variety of levels. Suggestions and examples are set out in Box B.

Box B Improving volunteering and pre-entry work-experience

There was a fair amount of agreement to the suggestion in the consultation that there should be equitable and accessible high-quality volunteering, work-experience and even paid internship opportunities. Comments included, from a strategic organisation, 'Museums need to start experimenting and evaluating and sharing experience... Consider advertising project-based volunteering opportunities so needs and benefits are clear... Gatekeepers to opportunities must honestly adhere to equal opportunities guidelines... Internships and work-experience placements [need to be] meaningful for the student and add value to the work of the museum.'⁴²

There are already some structured work-experience programmes, including:

- Young Graduates into Museums and Galleries, established by Global Graduates and now run by a consortium of national museums.
- In a response to a report demonstrating many schoolchildren have a negative perception of working in the sector, MLA is developing a work-experience programme for under 16s.⁴³
- Using a model developed by Birmingham City Council, the West Midlands Hub is offering paid 12-week internships.

Several respondents noted that managing and supporting volunteers 'can be a job in itself' and that to be satisfactory, work-experience programmes need to be properly and professionally managed⁴⁴, although 'small museums currently support entry-level volunteer placements on small resources'.⁴⁵

Practical suggestions included museums sharing volunteer co-ordinators, museums collaborating to offer internships/structured volunteering based at more than one museum to give a wider range of work-experience to individuals, a possible national (paid) internship scheme - either for people after they have completed a full-time museum-studies course or, as in specialist libraries and archives, before they embark on a course.

To properly serve the needs of different kinds of volunteers it is essential that museums recognise the fundamental difference between people who are volunteering in order to gain work-experience and those who are doing so for leisure.

One recent entrant was extremely positive about work-experience and said museums need to see it as advantageous to them. 'A 6-8 week placement can yield an enormous amount of benefit for both the host museum and the individual.' Looking ahead he anticipated a time when internships 'become a key consideration when setting up any project or programme.'⁴⁶

Summary of possible actions

- Museums could openly advertise and recruit for all their work-experience volunteering and internship opportunities
- Sector organisations (MA, MLA, SMC, CyMAL, NIMC, CCS, especially its forthcoming creative knowledge lab) could consider the possibility of establishing a central web-based information point to advertise volunteering, internship and other work-experience opportunities
- Expand work-experience internships for people at different stages in education.

The MLA work is aimed at schoolchildren, and Young Graduates into Museums and Galleries is aimed at 16-19 year olds, but these schemes are both very small and need expanding rapidly if they are to have a significant impact. There is also no scheme for undergraduates or for people considering a change in career.

- Sector organisations (some sector skills councils are doing this already⁴⁷) could consider drawing up 'light touch'⁴⁸ good-practice guidance and standardised models for work-experience volunteering, internships and work-experience
- There is probably much to learn from the USA where museum work-experience seems to be well organised
- Hubs and regional agencies could consider employing work-experience/internship co-ordinators to advise and support several museums. It seems feasible to aim initially at one post per region or nation
- National museums could consider playing a role in co-ordinating opportunities in museums nationwide with the same subject specialism
- University museums could link undergraduates seeking work-experience with the wider museum community
- Museums could consider the potential for including work-experience opportunities in specific projects. HLF could encourage this as a way of increasing community participation in museum projects. There may be potential for the work-experience to count as in-kind match funding

6 Museum-studies courses

6A The view from museums

6.1 Many employers prefer applicants for entry-level positions to have a museum-studies qualification. Good ones 'provide a range of understanding and familiarisation if relevant work-experience is lacking,' says Vanessa Trevelyan, head of Norfolk Museums. Mark Suggitt of Bradford Museums says they 'usually prove that the candidate is committed to the work and has theoretical understanding, usually linked to some work-experience.'

6.2 As in many other sectors, universities have increasingly moved into professional training.⁴⁹ Museum-studies courses are the main providers of entry-level museum training and perhaps half of new entrants to museum-specific jobs already have a museum-studies qualification. Others take them part-time in their first few years in the sector. In 2005/6 about 370 UK individuals were due to complete a museum-studies course recognised by the Museums Association. (This, and the other statistics here, are from the first full survey of UK museum-studies courses - see appendix 1.)

6.3 The overall effect of this has been to improve the skills and knowledge of many people applying for entry-level museum jobs. Mark Suggitt of Bradford Museums observes that museum-studies courses have produced 'museum people who have a sense of intellectual and social purpose. If they had not existed then we would have had more years of gentleman amateurism and antiquarianism.'

6.4 However, some employers are less happy. They may know about a few specific courses and see them as generally producing graduates that they like, but employers tend to be unsure about what different courses offer. The fact that museum-studies courses sit in a variety of university faculties and schools further confuses: a course situated in a business school is likely to be rather different from one closely related to an art-history or archaeology department. According to one museum director 'the problem is the profusion and variable quality of the courses.'⁵⁰

6.5 Employers can have unrealistic and often conflicting expectations of what courses should teach⁵¹ and tend to blame 'the courses' when they can't find a fully trained and experienced person to fill a particular vacancy. It is a regular refrain that museum-studies graduates lack certain skills, knowledge or aptitudes. According to one group of employers, graduates 'are not prepared for the organisations they are expected to work in'.⁵² There can be a tendency for employers to see courses as out of touch with museums. This may be a fair criticism of some courses, but others put great energy into revising the content of their courses to keep it up-to-date with best practice and leading-edge thinking: 'We continually evolve and adapt in response to the shifting needs of the sector.'⁵³

Education v training

6.6 In many professional areas employers tend to feel that university courses are more academic and theoretical than necessary.⁵⁴ Employers want training for a job, but universities seek to educate people about a discipline. The difference is significant. 'Higher education courses... can organise placements and opportunities for students to gain a taste of the working world but this is not the prime purpose of higher education.'⁵⁵

6.7 Museum-studies courses want to produce graduates who think critically and creatively about the sector. These people have the potential to be reflective practitioners who will challenge areas of poor practice, such as the confusion between research/evaluation and advocacy.⁵⁶ 'Theory and practice are not at all separate. Theory is brought to bear on practice and enables students to be more rigorous and critical in their day-to-day work.'⁵⁷ The museum sector needs creative, critical thinkers, but these qualities – and this form of education – are not always recognised as a strength by employers recruiting for entry-level posts. The chief executive of a strategic body says: 'The nature of the courses has diverged – either heritage management... or academic theory... employers are totally confused... I suspect that museum-studies courses are no longer the best way to learn about real museums, only about the theory of museology and management.'⁵⁸

6.8 Museum-studies lecturers, many of whom were once museum practitioners, have to play a difficult (perhaps ultimately impossible) balancing act to meet the expectations of museums and of university value systems.

Museum negligence?

6.9 Employer criticism of museum-studies courses is perhaps a little perverse. The courses are relieving museums of much of the task of providing entry-level training. While it may not be exactly what they want, the training is usually provided at no cost to employers. As shown in appendix 1, only 31 (or 8%) of 372 UK museum-studies students had their fees paid by their employer in 2005/6. In total about 300 individual UK students on Museums Association-recognised courses (163 full-time, 135 part-time) were paying their own fees in 2005/6; this equates to a 'hidden subsidy' on the cost of fees for training from private individuals of around £1m per year, a cost that should reasonably largely be borne by employers.

6.10 The growth in university museum-studies courses has had the unintended effect that many museums act as if they have little, or no, responsibility for entry-level training. The Institute of Conservation believes 'museums are not paid or well equipped to undertake [entry-level training]. While they clearly have a role working in partnership with tuition providers, they should not be expected to accept cohort after cohort of poorly prepared graduates and struggle to overcome the inadequacies they present.'⁵⁹

6.11 As in other sectors, such as broadcasting, law, design, music and theatre, employers generally share the perception that there are too many graduates of vocational university courses.⁶⁰ In the view of Tyne and Wear

Museums 'there is a danger that some courses are driven by higher education institutions' desire to maximise income rather than to address the needs of the sector.'⁶¹ Student numbers are discussed a little more below.

6.12 A few courses have a high proportion of overseas students. From an educational point of view, this is a good thing as the variety of student background, experience and outlook enriches the course. However, from a training perspective it can further restrict the ability of the courses to serve the specific needs of UK employers.

6.13 The main point of contact between most museums and courses is 4-8 week work placements. Many museums host placements, some with enthusiasm, but often with a sense of reluctant duty. Many consider them to be a chore to organise and an inadequate introduction to museum work. There is widespread uncertainty about whether responsibility for ensuring a good student-placement experience rests with the course provider or the host museum.⁶² Inadequate communication and planning means that placements are not always as useful as they could be for the host museum or the student.

6.14 Many museums have become substantially reliant on courses for entry-level training but museums have serious doubts about them. This cannot be healthy for the sector and there is an urgent need for a new settlement between museums and courses. Before discussing this, I want to look at student perspectives on the courses.

6B The view from students

6.15 As the number of university undergraduates has increased, individuals have increasingly felt it necessary to take postgraduate degrees in order to distinguish themselves to future employers. As part of this expansion of higher education, the number of places on museum-studies courses has increased. In the 2005/6 academic year there were about 200 full-time UK students taking Museums Association-recognised museum-studies courses (with a similar number taking them part-time) – see appendix 1. This is perhaps fewer than some critics of the courses might have expected, but it is a sharp contrast to the situation twenty years ago when there were 45 places for UK students, 27 of them supported with grants.⁶³ (Incidentally, the Hale report into museum training of 1987 called for an increase in the number of courses, although assumed that there would be extra grants to support students.⁶⁴)

Too many students?

6.16 As in many areas of vocationally related university teaching,⁶⁵ there are now probably more places on courses than there are suitable jobs available, although there is no reliable data on vacancies to confirm this. One course leader notes 'Universities operate in a free-market economy. 25 years ago it was a planned economy and universities were under much less funding pressure.'⁶⁶ Three courses out of 13 said that they deliberately restrict the number of places to avoid contributing to the perceived oversupply of

museum-studies graduates⁶⁷. Some other courses appear to take as many suitably qualified students as they can.

6.17 As discussed above in section 4, some museum-studies graduates fail to find a reasonable job in the sector. In the words of one unsuccessful student: 'I am still very angry with the university... for taking on so many students of museum studies each year and never once mentioning to us that it was unlikely we would get a paying job in a related field at the end of it.'⁶⁸ One successful graduate said: 'Having finished my course 7 months ago I am amazed at the number of people who having completed an essentially vocational course have had to go in a completely different direction.'⁶⁹

6.18 In response to such comments, one student wrote to 'express my own satisfaction with the course... initial exploration in the field of employment has verified that my MA is both practical and worthwhile.'⁷⁰ One course gave me several examples of 2005/6 students who had gained employment before they had completed their course dissertation.⁷¹ Another course asked: 'What proportion of the workforce and student body [have poor experiences gaining employment]?... We have a tremendous number of examples of students and recent entrants whose experiences are very different indeed.'⁷²

90%, 70% or 40%?

6.19 I'll endeavour to answer the question. Some courses say that 80% or even 90% of their students gain employment, but this headline figure may include overseas and part-time students, some of whom will have worked in museums previously, or be already employed in a museum while studying. It also pays no attention to the level of work and does not always distinguish between museums and the wider economy. In addition, it relies only on information known to the university – very few courses have data on the employment success of all of their graduates.

6.20 My analysis of returns from the four courses who supplied fairly detailed information on student employment destinations (see appendix 1) suggests that overall perhaps 70%-80% of UK full-time museum-studies students are working in the sector (including archives, visual arts and built heritage) in some way or another.

6.21 However, and crucially, perhaps only about 40% are in fact working in a reasonable job that justifies a postgraduate qualification, one to four years after graduating. (This varies between courses, and between cohorts, from about 30% to 50%.) Around a further 35% have an 'other' job in the sector, but one that does not appear to justify or necessarily require a postgraduate qualification. About 20% of graduates of recognised museum-studies courses do not appear to be working in the sector in any capacity one to four years after graduating. In summary the overall picture is approximately:

- 40% reasonable job in museums or related organisation
- 35% other job in museums or related organisation
- 20% not in museums or related organisation

These figures are approximate and rounded, so do not total 100%.

6.22 Whether this success rate is acceptable or not is perhaps a judgement best made by applicants for courses, who would certainly be helped by having access to detailed, reliable, consistent, comparable information on the employment destinations of graduates of different courses.

6.23 It is perhaps alarming that so many museum-studies graduates still failed to find reasonable work at a time of the largest single expansion of jobs in museums for many years - the creation of several hundred new posts thanks to Renaissance in the Regions. This increase in posts won't happen again and competition for entry looks set to get worse.

Does honesty pay?

6.24 Some, even most, students apply for (and pay for) museum-studies courses in the expectation that the course will almost automatically lead to museum employment, just as a PGCE or nursing qualification would usually lead directly to employment. This expectation is evidently wrong and it must be incumbent on the courses to make clear to, perhaps naïve, students that, as one current course leader says 'no qualification, whatever it's for, is an automatic ticket to success in the job market.'⁷³

6.25 Unless people are exceptionally well suited to museum work, a museum-studies qualification alone is not enough to get a reasonable entry-level job. The Newcastle course's information on volunteering says 'any [voluntary] opportunities that students are able to obtain and develop will strengthen their curriculum vitae' and 'be flexible about the types of work you undertake... in the early stages of career development, all experiences are valuable. Volunteering not only exposes you to areas you want to pursue, but it can also clarify those areas that you don't want to pursue as a professional.'⁷⁴

6.26 The need to get additional voluntary experience is a problem for students who cannot afford to volunteer while taking the course: researchers report that of postgraduate students they spoke to 'Most... had experienced difficulties in trying to secure employment within the sector on completion of their postgraduate study. Largely as a result of a lack of family support, a number ... had worked whilst studying in order to fund their courses and because of this had not been able to volunteer or undertake work-experience placements within the sector. Consequently, many lacked the necessary experience to be able to seek paid work.'⁷⁵

6.27 A former heritage-management course leader who now works in another academic area wrote: 'One of the problems is the pressure to get students in as universities are tightening their belts. This means that you can be reluctant to tell students the realities of the job market as they will go elsewhere to a university that isn't so honest. It's no secret that most universities are broke as the overseas market is collapsing, so courses are university driven, rather than work driven.'⁷⁶ This is, of course, not true of all courses – and not true of all lecturers, many of whom would not be happy working for an organisation

so driven by money that required them to compromise their values and standards in that way.

6.28 Graduates of the courses that are able to be highly selective (because they have many more applicants than places) are likely to be more suited to museum work in the first place and so more likely to gain employment. A higher proportion of students on less selective courses are perhaps more likely to struggle as they are inherently less suited to museum work. There is a question about the extent to which courses 'add value' to students' employability. The former heritage-management course leader cited above also wrote: 'In my teaching I found that academically gifted and well motivated students did well, while those who were less motivated and possibly expected an MA to be enough to get a job didn't. I suspect the good students would have been successful wherever and whatever they studied.'⁷⁷

6.29 Comments from courses on student (un)employability can be quite harsh. 'The people in question may not in fact be very capable people. It does happen even in courses where there's a lot of competition for entry, some students turn out to be, frankly, hopeless.'⁷⁸ 'Some students are unreasonably fussy and inflexible about the posts that they aspire to at this stage in their careers.'⁷⁹ 'There are usually a few students each year who do not get jobs easily, but often this is because they cannot move and it is only very occasionally because they turned out to be hopeless/impractical/graceless/lacking in initiative etc.'⁸⁰ This dismissal of student expectations may be pragmatic but it seems unfortunate.

6.30 The survey of courses appears to show that most people who wish to study museum studies each year are successful in getting a place on one course or another. This suggests that more could be done to weed out applicants who are very unlikely to get a reasonable job. Universities are divided about whether they should reject students who may not be successful in the sector. Some courses do this, but others are uneasy about doing so, feeling it is not their role to deny access to higher education on the basis of potential employability. Perhaps employers or sector bodies could help courses by playing a part in selecting students, as they do for Diversify-funded students who appear to have greater success in gaining reasonable jobs than the average.⁸¹ Applicants should perhaps be wary of courses that do not appear to put great effort into selecting them (see appendix 3 for more advice on choosing a museum-studies course).

Limiting access

6.31 Workforce diversity is discussed in full in section 7. Here it is useful to make a few brief observations about the diversity of museum-studies students. Museum-studies courses act to an extent as gatekeepers to museum work. However, as a whole they restrict access not by ability or potential but by ability to pay. There are few grants for postgraduate study (only 5% of UK students had grants from AHRC in 2005/6).⁸² 87% of full-time UK students pay their own fees. This discrimination by ability to pay is likely to increase over the next few years as government policy makes fees and

student debt increase. Postgraduate courses could become more costly still as a result of the Bologna Process - a Europe-wide move that may result in Masters qualifications being standardised at two years for full-time students (as opposed to the normal one year for UK museum-studies courses).⁸³

6.32 As far as UK students are concerned, the courses seem to appeal strongly to white women. In 2005/6 only 16% of full-time UK museum-studies students were male and only 6% of all UK students were from minority-ethnic backgrounds (and of that the great majority – 16 out of 23 - were on some kind of externally funded positive-action scheme). Two or three courses have contributed significant support and modest funding to the Diversify scheme but most have an exceedingly narrow UK student profile. The Arts and Humanities Research Council does nothing to increase the diversity of the postgraduate students it supports. In general, university rhetoric of 'widening participation' appears to have had pitifully little impact on the make-up of UK students undertaking postgraduate museum-studies courses.

6C A new settlement? Museums and universities working together

6.33 Nichola Johnson, head of the museology course at the University of East Anglia, warns: 'Universities need to take museum-studies as seriously as other vocational courses such as law, medicine or school teaching. There's a real risk that museum and heritage studies courses will become like many media studies courses with huge numbers of students whose postgraduate qualifications seem increasingly irrelevant to employers.'

6.34 This is true of many vocational university courses. As far as museum studies are concerned it is not too late to try to improve things. The main way to do this would be through closer working between museums and museum-studies courses, ideally in formal partnerships. Students and museums could gain if museums played a significant part in contributing to course content, providing substantial structured work-experience and selecting students. For example, as at Newcastle and Bournemouth, there could be formal agreements with local museums for their staff to teach on the course; as at UEA there could be high quality year-long work placements. As on Leicester distance learning, people currently working in the sector could be engaged as tutors. Museums have expressed a willingness to work more closely with universities and some lecturers are optimistic, saying they already work more closely with museums than ever before.

6.35 More strategically, there could be more local, regional, or even national discussion between courses and museums about skill priorities and course content. This could avoid the current situation, stereotyped as the continuing production by universities of large numbers of potential social history curators, when museum demand is for education and learning staff and natural science and technology expertise (also see section 8). The demise of CHNTO validation (and the resulting 'limbo' in which Museums Association recognition finds itself) has removed one of the mechanisms for having this conversation between museums and courses. It seems likely that any future scheme would

want to take full account of the employment success of students and the success of the course in representing the diversity of the UK population. It seems possible that both of these could be measured objectively and courses rated by their success, although it would also be important to retain some of the more qualitative aspects of validation and recognition.

6.36 How might things move forwards? Discussions and partnerships are probably most likely to get started if the initiative is taken by individual courses, perhaps working with the regional MLA and hub and other appropriate large museums. There should perhaps be a degree of formality to the relationships, as at Newcastle where representatives of local museums serve on the course's board of studies. It is important for sustainability and effectiveness that relationships should develop at an organisation-to-organisation level as well as at a personal level. The government has identified the benefits of more partnership.⁸⁴

6.37 This will require time from universities and museums. It is time that will be well spent if it improves the utility of courses for museums and students. Partnerships would also help museums learn from university research and make better use of the knowledge of museum-studies departments. These relationships and partnerships could also give a framework in which there is more likelihood of effectively meeting the challenge of diversifying the workforce, although that is unlikely to be achieved without a significant commitment of funds from the museum and university sectors (see section 7).

6.38 However, as discussed above, it is important to recognise that however close relationships become, there will still be some difference between the aims of universities and employer wants. The experience of doing a university-based course will always be different to the experience of museum work. 'There is no such thing as a postgraduate course that really tells people what working is like (in any sector)... Close links might help but there will always be big differences between courses and the real world of work.'⁸⁵

6.39 This suggests that, in an ideal world, employers, rather than universities, would take the lead in entry-level training. In many cases they would need higher-education partners to help with this⁸⁶ and so might, for example, fund new entrants to take museum-studies courses part-time, while also offering them paid, structured, on-the-job training. This is probably unachievable on a large scale, because of the high cost to employers.

A part-time future?

6.40 There seems to be general agreement – from museums, from individuals and from universities – that it is more beneficial for museum-studies courses to be taken part-time, while the individual student is also based in a museum. This has been one of the successes of the Diversify traineeship model, in which trainees spend two years simultaneously taking a course and gaining work-based experience in a museum⁸⁷. Museums benefit because the student is regularly bringing information and ideas into the workplace and sharing them with colleagues, individual students benefit from the combination of

work-experience and the broader context that is given by the university, universities benefit because of the range of experiences brought by students from their museums and the links the students have with current museum work.

6.41 Some universities report a decline in UK applicants for full-time places and a deliberate policy to shift towards part-time students might be recommended in view of the problems full-time courses bring around diversity, funding and relevance to employers. Indeed the looming growth of student debt may make full-time courses (and museum studies in general) increasingly unattractive to UK students, so the market may force courses closer to a part-time, in-service model.⁸⁸ Half of the Museums Association-recognised courses already have more part-time than full-time students, or broadly similar numbers of part- and full-time students.

6.42 Unfortunately, in spite of its weaknesses in terms of discriminatory effects and distance from the world of work, many museums and some courses seem firmly wedded to the model in which people are trained pre-entry at their own expense before starting work in a museum. Interestingly, in archives and specialist libraries individuals are expected to undertake a (paid) one-year general traineeship *before* taking a postgraduate course. This model might suit museums well and be an imaginative way of maximising the benefit of short-term contract posts.

Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration

6.43 So much for co-operation between museums and universities. There is also a need for collaboration between universities. The market-led funding system makes it inevitable that universities will sometimes find themselves in competition for individual students, but there is great potential benefit from increased cooperation and sharing of expertise between courses. This happens routinely through formal networks in some subject areas – such as archive studies, librarianship and cultural management, but the museum-studies area seems to be a rather immature in this respect and is missing the opportunity to access various funding streams designed to support collaboration within higher education.⁸⁹ There are exchanges of external examiners, peer reviews of courses and occasional Museums Association-led meetings for recognised courses but overall there are rather few relationships between different courses. This is bizarre as the courses are all largely aiming to serve the same end and are all working in the not-for-profit sector.

6.44 There are many challenges for university museum-studies courses, but I know from my discussions that, with very few exceptions, individual lecturers are dedicated to the ideals of public service, committed to the improvement of the museum sector and determined to do the best for their students. I hope that lecturers individually, and courses corporately, will tackle local problems and take the opportunity to reflect, build partnerships with museums and with other courses and enhance their provision to improve their relevance and counter discriminatory effects of the higher-education funding system.

Box C Improving museum-studies courses

If museum-studies courses want to improve their usefulness to museum employers, and so better serve their students, there are a number of areas that merit attention:

Collaboration and partnership

Closer working between museum-studies courses and museums could:

- better match course content to employer needs and tackle areas of skill shortage
- deliver better training (including more work-based learning)
- ensure a good balance of teaching that includes current museum staff teaching to complement university staff who bring wider perspectives
- ensure a wide range of people with career potential are selected for courses
- increase the impact and influence of museum-studies departments on museums

As a starting point each course could hold regular (perhaps twice yearly) meetings with museums, especially those it hopes will employ its students

Courses could consider the benefits of working together to:

- engage with museums
- develop course content
- share best practice in teaching and work-experience

The sector would benefit if, at the least, the courses formed a museum trainers forum. Funding may be available to develop more extensive ways of collaborating

Course structures

Courses could consider the benefits of gradually moving away from full-time tuition in favour of part-time/modular/distance-learning for people in museum work. Ideally some of these places would be available as part of formal partnerships with museums and include extensive work-experience. Courses could take the lead in trying to establish such partnerships (some of which could have a positive-action element to them)

Courses could explore other models of training, for example the system in archives and specialist libraries in which full-time students gain substantial structured paid work-experience before they start the course. Courses could take the lead in encouraging museums to establish paid pre-course training places

There seems to be fairly general agreement that the amount of structured work-experience organised as part of courses should be increased

Courses could work together and with museums to share best practice in work placements

Selection of students and employment data

It would help applicants if courses worked together to devise a consistent method of collecting and presenting data on student employment

In the meantime courses should make the difficulties of gaining employment clear to applicants before they accept a place on the course. The Museums Association could consider devising a standard form of words that could be used by all recognised courses

When selecting students who seek a career in museums, courses need to try to be sure that they really are likely to succeed

Individual courses should be clear about the specific types of job they are preparing students for

Validation/recognition

Following the demise of CHNTO validation, courses might take the lead on proposing a replacement scheme. The single most important criterion for a new validation/recognition scheme would be the relevance of the course to student and employer needs

Any replacement scheme for Museums Association recognition would probably want to address the entry-level issues as well as (or instead of) the issues of relevance to the AMA. It could assess some or all of:

- Breadth of overall introduction to museums and their context
- Quality of work-based learning
- Success in preparing students for work
- Relationships with museums
- Widening participation/diversity
- Clarity about the specific types of jobs the course is aimed at
- Selection procedures
- Information for applicants about employment difficulties

A replacement scheme might set out to identify a smaller number of centres of excellence, or have some kind of limit on the number of places it recognises each year

7 Workforce diversity

7.1 Employers often lament the fact that so few men and so few people from minority-ethnic backgrounds apply for entry-level museum jobs. People with disabilities are probably significantly underrepresented, too. Some museums would like more staff from poorer backgrounds.

7.2 Until recently, museums were defeatist about this, concluding that people from some backgrounds simply didn't want to work in the sector. A more nuanced view is that there are people from under-represented groups who *would* like to work in museums, but they are unable (or unwilling) to make the necessary pre-entry sacrifices to meet the entry requirements described above.⁹⁰

Race

7.3 The Museums Association's Diversify scheme shows that there are, for example, plenty of bright, motivated minority-ethnic people who want to work in museums. Nearly 80 people have been trained as part of the scheme; many of them now work in museums and say that without Diversify supporting them with paid work-experience and a museum-studies qualification they wouldn't be in the sector.⁹¹ This conclusion is supported by the fact that of the few UK minority-ethnic full- and part-time museum-studies students in 2005/6, fewer than 30% were paying their own fees, as opposed to almost 85% of white UK students.⁹² The Diversify scheme is successful but small and is only scratching the surface of the under-representation of people from minority-ethnic backgrounds.⁹³

Gender and Disability

7.4 Employers are also concerned that few men make it as far as an entry-level job.⁹⁴ There is no recent data on the gender balance of the workforce but 84% of UK full-time students on museum-studies courses were female in 2005/6. There is no reliable data on people with disabilities in the workforce and universities are cautious about the reliability of their data on students with disabilities; so far there has been little work in this area.⁹⁵

Class

7.5 Questions of class are harder to summarise because of the difficulties of definition. It is nevertheless clear that as chances of employment are increased through voluntary work and self-funded training, this discriminates strongly against people without financial support from family or friends. This is very different to the situation 15-20 years ago. Then, undergraduates did not have high levels of debt, there were proportionately more grants for postgraduate training, there were more museum-based traineeships and, as one national museum commented, 'We certainly made great use of ...government schemes like the... Manpower Services Commission Youth Opportunities Programmes and job creation projects... in the 1980s... They

brought many people into our workforce who would not have got near us through “traditional” routes.’⁹⁶ Student fees and debt are set to increase in the next few years, exacerbating the discrimination against poorer people still further. Low pay may be a factor that deters people from poorer backgrounds, too.⁹⁷

Image or practical difficulties?

7.6 Several recent reports have suggested museums have an image problem and there’s a need to improve careers advice and promote museum work to a wider range of young people.⁹⁸ That’s true, but increased promotional activity will be limited in impact if routes into museum work are not made easier. This requires, for example many more paid traineeships or apprenticeships for people from non-traditional backgrounds with potential, but little, or no, prior experience and ways of ensuring they are not drowned out in the shortlisting process by overqualified competition.⁹⁹

7.7 Museums have become used to appointing over-qualified people. ‘The current oversupply of well qualified entrants worked against pressures to diversify the workforce... Jobs that could perfectly well be done by non-graduates with interest and aptitude (and used to be) were now being carried out by people with postgraduate qualifications simply because there were so many wanting to work in museums.’¹⁰⁰

7.8 The practical difficulties of entering museum work arguably hamper diversity more than the image problems. Ruth Smith of Cambridge University Careers Service says: ‘I think the principal defects of museum work in university-student eyes are, in descending order of significance:

- Competition for jobs
- You have to pay for your own training
- Probably no income for at least a year after graduation
- Pay is dire at entry and throughout
- No qualifications or training that make you attractive in another sphere (unlike, say, law or accountancy or teaching)
- Short-term contracts
- Lack of career path and progression’¹⁰¹

One solution: internal progression

7.9 Carefully designed internal progression schemes, as at Lincolnshire Museums, offer a solution to this as they provide support and development that can allow inexperienced people from a range of backgrounds with potential to start in front-of-house roles and progress to curatorial and management positions, often supported by NVQs.¹⁰² Some people began as non-graduates, and have now gained the skills, knowledge and competence to compete successfully for promotion against external candidates.

7.10 The West Midlands hub explained: ‘If we wish to attract a diverse workforce which reflects the communities we serve, we need to have a

number of pathways into the profession which allow staff to work up... to achieve whatever their full potential is. Without this wider access, other initiatives remain a drop in the ocean, a situation which only serves to maintain the current over representation of white middle-class employees. We need to remove the glass ceiling most staff encounter at level 2 and 3 and recognise that those not going through HE bring many different skills and talents.' To support staff progression the hub is working with Staffordshire University to introduce a foundation degree in heritage and culture 'aimed at the large group of staff in museums whose educational opportunities have in the past been limited but have the desire to pursue a collections-related or management career in the sector.'¹⁰³

Action needed

7.11 If individual museums, and the sector as a whole, are serious about wanting to diversify the workforce then substantial action will be needed to establish more accessible entry routes that appeal to and support a wider range of people. Encouragingly, the national museums have committed to planning the future ethnic diversity of their workforces and for 2008-10 the Renaissance hub museums will be asked to produce workforce diversification plans.¹⁰⁴ Creative and Cultural Skills are developing an apprenticeship framework to provide an alternative entry route. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council is continuing to support the Diversify scheme, including management-level traineeships, the Scottish Museums Council has supported Diversify, Arts Council England is supporting the Inspire scheme and the Museums Association is hoping to pilot the Diversify model for people with disabilities, thanks to funding from the former Museums and Galleries Disability Association.

7.12 These initiatives are all welcome and each will play a small part and help some individuals. However, there is no sign of an overall plan with targets that is ambitious enough to meet the challenge and counter the in-built discrimination of the current approach to entry. Many organisations are still doing nothing to help diversify the workforce. The great majority of museums do not yet have any kind of internal development schemes or positive-action training or work-experience programmes. The few that exist are often supported by external funding rather than core budgets. Museum-studies courses are failing to broaden participation. The Arts and Humanities Research Council has missed the opportunity to take action to target some support at under-represented groups in its review of the way it awards funding to support postgraduate study. DCMS has argued strongly for workforce diversification but has done little to support it in practice.

Box D Improving workforce diversity

Recent commitments by MLA and NMDC mean that many large museums will be taking an active approach to diversifying their workforce. Over the next few years the amount of knowledge of successful approaches is likely to grow enormously. A few things are clear now:

- Museums need to have a range of entry routes, accessible to a range of people with the potential to have a successful museum career. These are likely to include apprenticeships, traineeships and foundation degrees
- Internal progression schemes have great potential for diversifying many parts of the workforce
- Positive-action schemes targeting particular under-represented groups will have a significant role for some time to come
- There is work to do to promote museum careers to a wider range of potential entrants, but this needs to be supported by accessible entry routes
- There should be open recruitment to all entry-level posts. Short-term, junior posts often lead to more reasonable work so all positions, permanent and temporary, should be advertised. Everyone should have an equal chance to access 'foot-in-the door' opportunities and they should not be automatically or informally offered to people already known to the museum
- There may be benefits in marketing entry-level jobs (and places on museum-studies courses) to students at more diverse, newer universities
- The Museums Association could consider establishing a service to help employers target minority-ethnic applicants
- More work needs to be done to diversify the intake of students onto university courses that supply museums. In addition to museum studies this includes history, art history, and archaeology. AHRC should take the need for positive-action into account in its funding for postgraduate students. Museum-studies courses should have their own positive-action initiatives
- A substantial positive-action initiative, led by DCMS, could make a considerable difference. There may be benefit in an approach that covers several parts of the cultural sector
- There is scope for more positive-action activity in Scotland and a need for action in Wales and Northern Ireland
- National and regional targets for workforce diversification will be useful to encourage and assess progress

8 Skills shortages

8.1 Although there are many suitable candidates for most entry-level jobs, there are some types of posts that it is almost impossible to fill. In at least one part of the country 'education officers are becoming as rare as hen's teeth.'¹⁰⁵ In some cases there is competition from other sectors that pay better, for example for posts requiring good IT or teaching skills.¹⁰⁶ In other cases the gaps are because people with the requisite skills and knowledge are not filtering through the current pre-entry training system.¹⁰⁷ Heather Broughton, Leicestershire's head of heritage and environment says: 'We need to build relationships with trainers, including universities, to tailor entry-level training to meet local circumstances.'

8.2 Museums recognise the need to be more active in addressing skills gaps but there are few, if any, effective mechanisms that enable museums consistently to record and anticipate skill shortages and then work together and with trainers to try to ensure a supply of suitably skilled new entrants. 'There is no lead from the Museums Association or the Museums Libraries and Archives Council on what areas of work are currently most prolific, such as education work, where [there] is a shortage of suitable candidates, and how applicants can prepare themselves for work in these areas.'¹⁰⁸ This is perhaps something that could be addressed effectively by hubs and MLA as they increase their strategic influence on workforce development. Creative and Cultural Skills should be active here. However, previous work on skill shortages and skills foresight appears to have had disappointingly little impact on entry-level training.

8.3 The museum sector faces particular issues around object-based specialist knowledge as this is so particular to museums and is not being provided by museum-studies courses.¹⁰⁹ Employers despair that academically well qualified applicants usually lack 'a sensibility for the object'.¹¹⁰ In many areas academia has moved away from material evidence in favour of theory. One national museum senior curator commented 'Our greatest problem [is] finding subject specialists'¹¹¹. There is possibly a leadership role for national and designated museums. Some larger nationals do intervene and target certain skills, working with universities to ensure a supply of applicants with the knowledge they need; the current difficulty in recruiting natural science curators has led some museums to consider setting up traineeships.¹¹² In the view of University College, London: 'It is probably most appropriate for this kind of training to be provided post-entry, via development programmes for staff, the development of a research culture and through training perhaps provided by the subject specialist networks.'¹¹³ The erosion of assistant keeper positions doesn't help, as in many museums these used to be effectively curatorial traineeships. Undoubtedly, if subject-specialist training is to improve, museums will have to take more active responsibility. Development of specialist knowledge perhaps requires a report in its own right.¹¹⁴

9 Improving entry to the workforce

9.1 There would be many benefits if museums played a bigger part in entry-level training, rather than assuming that individuals had responsibility for acquiring key skills and knowledge before they get their first paid museum job. Most problems identified here would not exist if more museums were true learning organisations, committed to recruiting and developing their staff properly. If skill shortages are to be tackled and workforce diversity is to improve then it is vital that museums take more responsibility for entry-level training. This short section summarises the key actions museums could consider taking.

9.2 All museums need to have entry routes that suit a wide range of people, not just those who have been able or willing to spend time and money training and volunteering. However, many do not – and there are far too few traineeships. In addition to those in the Diversify programme, I came across examples at the V&A, the National Trust, at the National Gallery and at Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

- All museums should have genuine entry-level positions that do not expect applicants to have previous museum experience or museum-specific qualifications and offer the opportunity to gain experience and qualifications and to progress
- Larger museums could all be expected to have formal training programmes
- Medium sized museums could all designate one post as a training position, possibly shared between two or three museums
- Museums should consider internal progression schemes so that all staff, joining the organisation at any level, have the opportunity to build their competence and knowledge and achieve their full potential
- Museums could work regionally (or nationally) to introduce training programmes. These could be employer-led partnerships that involve universities and other training providers
- Hubs could lead generalist training programmes; nationals could lead more specialist programmes in their area
- There may be particular benefits in regionally or nationally organised traineeships in areas of recruitment difficulty such as natural history curatorship. There may also be benefit in specific entry initiatives for education and learning and community staff, as these are areas where there is a growing demand

9.3 Museums have got rather greedy in what they expect of entry-level staff. This militates against diversity and is, frankly, exploitative and unfair on individual job-seekers.

- Museums should not unnecessarily inflate requirements for entry-level posts, even as a way of reducing the number of applications
- Museums should select new entrants on the basis of their competence and potential, rather than requiring particular qualifications
- Museums should not specify a museum-studies qualification as essential (or even desirable) unless it genuinely is

- Museums that want entry-level staff with museum-studies qualifications should consider how they can support people to get those qualifications and also engage with appropriate museum-studies courses to influence their content and if possible assist with course development and work-experience
- Sector bodies (MA, MLA, SMC, CyMAL, NIMC or SSC) could consider providing best-practice guidance on entry-level job descriptions, person specifications, recruitment processes and development opportunities

9.4 It is important to recognise that some skills and knowledge are unlikely to be available in new entrants and so they will have to be provided through structured on-the-job training and development.

9.5 In addition to induction to the organisation employing them, new entrants need induction to the museum sector as a whole. This might be quite extensive and is especially important for entrants who have not taken a museum-studies qualification or undertaken extensive voluntary work. Examples include museum basics programmes organised by the North East Hub and by University of East Anglia. There may be a role for national or regional sector organisations.

- Good induction schemes would make it easier for museums to recruit people without museum-specific experience or qualifications

9.6 Further actions museums could take are set out in:
 Box B Improving volunteering and pre-entry work-experience
 Box D Improving workforce diversity
 Box E Improving development in the first five years

9.7 There is particular potential to use Renaissance in the Regions to do more to improve entry to the workforce. Renaissance has done much to support workforce development but so far little at entry-level as the need to get 'quick wins' has led museums to generally recruit staff who already have museum experience.

- MLA and the hubs need to give careful thought to how Renaissance could do more to reshape entry to the workforce

10 The first five years: wasted talent?

10.1 As described above, most employers play a minimal role in entry-level training and tend to see individuals (and university museum-studies courses) as responsible for ensuring that they have the necessary skills for entry to the sector. It is therefore no surprise to find that most museums fail to develop new recruits adequately. Someone from a strategic body commented 'The move towards a postgraduate profession has done us no favours... entrants should expect to be properly inducted, trained and developed.'¹¹⁵

10.2 One hub noted that museums simply do not recognise the scale of support that is needed by new entrants: 'New entrants to the curatorial and collection-care posts of museums are mostly, but not always, young people entering on their first career after university. Systems should be in place to equip them with development opportunities... This will in the first instance build their confidence to take on much wider roles within their... organisation.'¹¹⁶ 'The sector is underinvesting in new recruits,'¹¹⁷ concluded the Department for Culture Media and Sport.

A management-recruitment crisis?

10.3 Sheila McGregor, of the West Midlands Hub puts it more strongly: 'The abundance of candidates for museum jobs has led to complacency within the sector about recruitment, professional development, pay and retention. While there may be plenty of candidates for museum jobs, there is growing evidence of a crisis in recruitment and leadership... and many institutions having to advertise several times over for senior jobs.'¹¹⁸

10.4 Employers reported difficulties with recruiting for almost all kinds of jobs that combine a specialism with management. Examples include access and inclusion managers, middle-management conservators, marketing managers, learning managers and senior curators.¹¹⁹ A hub leader said 'There may be 50 candidates for a first job, but that is certainly not the case for subsequent jobs.'¹²⁰ This provides clear evidence that museums are not doing enough to train and develop staff in their first few years in post.¹²¹ To increase the pool of applicants for management positions, the sector may need to become better at recruiting management-level staff from other sectors and also make it easier for people to return to museum work after a career break. There is also a lack of movement between different types of museum with, for example, national museum staff rarely taking up management roles in local authority museums (although increasingly there is movement the other way).

High expectations, low support

10.5 Museum directors can be demanding about the qualities they want in their staff (see box A) but in reality many first jobs are narrowly focused on, for example, documentation, or tied very closely to a single project, giving post-holders little chance to use their talents or develop their skills further. Other entry-level jobs have wider responsibilities and post-holders do develop, but

usually in a rather haphazard way, driven by the short-term, day-to-day demands of the work. 'Entrants are expected to either be thrown in the deep end and undertake a wide range of tasks, or sit in a darkened store cataloguing for two years.'¹²² Several museums, such as the Harris Museum and Art Gallery feel 'our Diversify trainees have been given a better induction into the profession than other members of staff who have entered the profession by taking up an entry-level job which is narrow in focus.'¹²³

10.6 The experience varies from job to job and museum to museum. New entrants to larger museums can perhaps become too specialised, too early.¹²⁴ A senior manager in a national museum commented 'working in a national museum seems to lead towards over-specialism, lack of transferable skills and becoming isolated from the museum profession as a whole.'¹²⁵ In contrast 'anybody starting in an independent museum will have a far wider range of experiences from which to learn.'¹²⁶ Different entry-level jobs in different museums can lead in very different directions. As one senior national museum curator put it, people 'think that the first job is the foot on the ladder, but there are loads of different ladders, each with different methods of climbing.'¹²⁷

Short-term contracts and freelancers

10.7 Short-term contracts are a mixed blessing. Some new entrants use them as a way of getting a wide range of experience, in a range of museums, relatively rapidly, building an appealing, varied cv. Others get stuck on a series of short-term contracts at a similar level with similar responsibilities and find that their skills and employability narrow. People on short-term contracts are rarely encouraged to develop and can end the contract without any significant improvement in their skills – and little prospect of gaining a more senior position. Someone from a strategic body said: 'There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that staff on short-term contracts have no structured training and development programme, and are not uncommonly refused training on the grounds that they have to focus on delivering the project and there is "no time for that".'¹²⁸

10.8 Short-term contracts are here to stay and individual museums, and the sector as a whole, needs to do more to support the development of people on short-term contracts (and freelancers). Perhaps all short-term contract posts should be redesigned as training positions.¹²⁹ This already could be possible with some funding streams. For example the Designation Challenge Fund offers 10% of staff costs for recruitment, training and severance. A manager of a designated museum commented 'it is criminal if museums with designated collections taking on project staff don't consider how to give them access to training and experience which will help them find their next job. All hub-funded and other fixed-term posts should make adequate provision for training and development.'¹³⁰ Other funders may need more persuasion: 'We had a poor experience with HLF recently when they refused to allow the training of a project manager on the basis that it wouldn't improve the HLF project. So we were unable to act as good employers and develop our staff for the overall benefit of the heritage community.'¹³¹ The Museums Association needs to ensure that the AMA works for people on short-term contracts.

10.9 Some staff begin work as freelancers and the sector needs to find ways to encourage their development, especially as some are effectively 'cultural entrepreneurs' and are 'potential leaders of the future [who can] develop a range of management skills which they then take into organisations.'¹³² Conversely, museums sometimes engage a freelancer or consultant to undertake work that could perhaps instead be offered as a development opportunity to an existing member of staff.

Poor managers

10.10 Many current line managers did not experience good support for training and development from their line managers and so do not see it as their responsibility to support the new entrants they are responsible for. More basic training for line managers could help.¹³³ More generally, 'the occupants of senior jobs, without professional training and skills, [do not believe] that it is important... If they got on without all this training stuff, why should anyone else need it?'¹³⁴ There appears to be 'a culture of repeating the experiences of those who are recruiting because "that's what I had to do" '¹³⁵ and 'a failure of current leaders to nurture their up and coming colleagues.'¹³⁶ Perhaps there needs to be a sector-wide initiative to encourage all managers to actively develop the staff they are responsible for.

10.11 Many current senior staff are not good role models. Hitherto those with the best specialist skills and knowledge (the most published curator, the most accomplished conservator) have tended to rise to the top of departments, not those with well developed management and leadership skills.

A reluctance to progress?

10.12 It is frustrating, but perhaps not surprising, that some junior staff do not appear to want to progress: 'As in many other fields, promotion often means a change in job focus, and many people in the museum field still don't want to take that route.'¹³⁷ One curator said: 'The higher up the ladder you go, the further you get from the collections. Management and local or national government wheezes are not what curators went into the profession for. They like working with collections.'¹³⁸

10.13 Some senior managers are critical of the attitudes of some junior staff. There can be 'a reluctance... to take responsibility for even minor actions or decisions. In my experience this is one of the main reasons for a person's failure to climb up the ladder: lack of imagination to think past problems and a reticence to take responsibility.'¹³⁹

10.14 Some see poor role models - experience of poor management - as the reason why some junior staff don't want to take on wider responsibilities. A young museum manager noted: 'Some don't want to be "management" because they believe that to manage you must give up your principles and take up a dictatorial role! I think they fail to understand what management is or can be; often they are not sent on management/leadership training.'¹⁴⁰

10.15 It is perhaps a combination of these things, together with a lack of confidence (often caused by a lack of training and development). Employers feel that plenty of the staff they recruit at entry-level have the potential to progress, yet somehow don't. Sally MacDonald of University College London observes: 'I've always found that one gets stronger fields for entry-level posts than more senior ones, with people quite capable of doing the senior posts only applying for junior ones, underestimating their abilities or perhaps not wanting greater responsibility.'

Individual frustration

10.16 From the individual's point of view, the first few years in post can be bewildering and disappointing. Once the initial delight (or relief) at getting that first museum job has worn off, employees can become demoralised, especially if they end up in a position that doesn't allow them to make the best use of their skills. One says: 'Some aspects of [museum work are] rather disheartening: competition for jobs that pay too little to someone who is way over-qualified, as well as lack of job security.'¹⁴¹ Another says woefully: 'I am going to have to leave the profession as I really cannot see any future in it for me and I feel bitterly disappointed and let down by this as I have worked so hard and gained a lot of experience, but it still seems to lead to nothing. [There is a] dreadful waste of talent.'¹⁴²

10.17 Pay is a real problem: 'I have only been able to stay in my current post as long as I have (3 years) because my husband has a well paid job.'¹⁴³ A sector body regretted that there appears to be a view that low pay 'is a problem to be circumvented through imaginative recruitment and training rather than tackled head-on. It is only possible to make so much progress through creative thinking, improved training, etc. We believe that the Museums Association is well placed to lead on a sector-wide campaign to redress years of chronic low pay in the heritage sector.'¹⁴⁴

10.18 Career progression, as well as entry to the sector, is hampered by the number of over-qualified and experienced people looking for work. Research for the Museums Association's salary guidelines found that jobs requiring on paper 3-5 years experience can be taken by people with perhaps 10 years experience.¹⁴⁵ There is a significant amount of stagnation in the workforce, with many people feeling stuck: 'I do not know how long I can realistically stay in [my current entry-level] position... I am 28 years old, intelligent and capable, have spent vast amounts on my education and yet am earning [£11,000] just above the minimum wage.'¹⁴⁶

10.19 As employers nevertheless find it hard to recruit for many junior and middle-management positions, enhanced training and development could perhaps successfully get things moving, although it is alarming that so many people still appear to be stuck after the creation of several hundred new posts thanks to Renaissance in the Regions.¹⁴⁷

10.20 A manager from Thinktank, a recently established museum, stressed that not all staff were stuck. 'It may be the case for some but not all. In our... museum, 40% of employees have been with the organisation since it opened five years ago, and all but one of these people have progressed upwards through the organisation.'¹⁴⁸

The answer: a museum's responsibility

10.21 So, what is the answer! In their first one or two years people need to be given a rounded introduction to a wide range of museum jobs. For the next few years they need to be challenged to take on more management and leadership responsibilities.¹⁴⁹ They also need to build a specialism, such as education, marketing or subject expertise¹⁵⁰.

10.22 Some individuals develop this for themselves (perhaps with the help of a continuing professional development scheme such as that in the AMA) but most people need encouragement and active support from their employer. 'Not necessarily structured training courses, but... organisations with a culture of reflection and action learning and one which supports CPD in its broadest sense: coaching, job rotation, placements into other museums and cultural organisations.'¹⁵¹ 'Contacts, knowledge and experience accrue slowly over time. These things need to be nurtured by the employer.'¹⁵² While some training and development needs funding, much of the best practice is a result of organisations having good human resources practices and systems and a strong culture of training and development, which need not cost any more than having poor support for staff.

10.23 As some museums recognise, there is untapped potential in their existing staff and they need to take more responsibility for training and developing them, both for internal progression and to benefit the sector at large. However, there are very few examples of posts with structured training and development. These include the five-year curatorial assistants programme at the V&A, three-year developmental assistant posts at the National Trust and Lincolnshire's approach to staff progression. Some museums appear to resist training staff on the perhaps rather selfish grounds that they will be 'poached' by other employers – but if everyone took responsibility for training their staff properly, surely this wouldn't be a problem.

10.24 While larger museums can have their own training and development schemes, smaller ones need to work together or be supported by sector organisations – perhaps within a national framework. Museums could perhaps learn from school teaching. In their first year in work teachers are released for one day a week for development and they have a mentor. Museums could also learn from their own past. A curator who entered museums in 1979 as a graduate trainee recalls 'I had tremendous support from my organisation... and also from within the north west region. This consisted of a programme of monthly tutorials run by the then North West Museums Service where individuals like myself could get together... Each day consisted of a full day of organised activities with guided tours and presentations on a topic relevant to the Museums Diploma. These tutorials were available to me until I finished my

studies. When I went to Leicester University on study leave to do the diploma courses I realised that the regional training was not available across the country. In hindsight I realise what benefits this type of training gave me... both in-depth training in my subject area learnt “on the job” but at the same time... a much wider perspective on the profession. The regional tutorials gave practical examples to the more formal learning given on the Leicester courses. Overall I was given time to learn and network with others from all levels within organisations and all museum disciplines.’¹⁵³

10.25 As well as work-based support for development there is also a larger role for sector organisations. For example: ‘Outside the workplace, mentoring... can be a great help... Ideally, this should be encouraged and managed by the individual’s professional body. In a climate of fragmented career patterns, the professional body and the mentor provide continuity of support, encouragement and information.’¹⁵⁴ The Museums Association helps people registered for the AMA with mentors and support groups but could perhaps do more to extend this model, especially to those who are not yet in a position where they feel ready to do the AMA. The AMA itself could perhaps play a bigger role (see box F) and there is still a need to develop a replacement for the Sharing Museum Skills Millennium Awards scheme that enabled people to develop through secondments to other museums.

Box E Improving development in the first five years

To improve support for people entering museum work:

- Museums need to actively encourage new entrants to develop. They need to help staff consider their future career and develop the skills and knowledge they need to progress. Better employers push their staff and encourage them to move on and develop their management and leadership skills
- Museums should devise approaches to staffing that give new entrants the opportunity to experience a range of different types of museum work. In all but the smallest museums, new staff can quickly become very narrow in their experience and outlook. One approach could be for new entrants to spend one day a week in different departments, or working with a member of staff in a different area, for their first one or two years. Alternatively people could be seconded into different areas for short periods
- Line managers need to be skilled in developing the staff that report to them. A programme of training for line managers, perhaps organised regionally or nationally, could have a significant impact
- Medium and larger museums could introduce their own internal progression schemes to encourage and support staff progression
- All short-term contract staff should have development opportunities to improve their career prospects. The cost of this should be built into funding applications. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to redesignating short-term contract posts as traineeships
- Development means much more than going on courses and there could be more secondment and mentoring opportunities
- Some support could be provided on a regional basis; for example new entrants from several museums could meet together regularly to experience other museums, hear about museum issues and develop their skills. This could be organised by consortia of museums, hubs or regional MLAs. It might link to the AMA
- The Museums Association could consider a scheme specifically for new entrants to provide some of the things outlined above. It might link to the AMA, perhaps a first step towards the AMA. The MA could pilot it with Diversify alumni
- Sector bodies (MA, MLA, SMC, CyMAL, NIMC, CCS, MPG) could consider ways of advising new entrants in developing their careers, such as career development days, career management advice, etc
- Individuals entering museum work should demand development opportunities

Box F The AMA

The Associateship of the Museums Association, AMA, was relaunched in the mid 1990s. It gives people a framework to structure their development in their first few years in museum work. Its key characteristics are that individuals:

- take responsibility for their own development (demonstrated by planned continuing professional development)
- have a broad understanding of museum work and museum principles (demonstrated partly by a qualification, such as a university museum-studies qualification or an NVQ)

All individuals taking the AMA have a mentor from another organisation. It has been a great success, especially the emphasis on mentored self-directed development, but this has perhaps allowed some employers to shirk their responsibility for training their staff.

The AMA is designed to be flexible in content so it can suit all types of museum staff. This strength is also potentially a weakness as it doesn't formally encourage staff to explicitly develop skills and knowledge in a specific area of museum work¹⁵⁵. (Paradoxically there also appears to be a perception that the AMA is not relevant to some kinds of museum staff.) It has not met its original aim of being suitable for ambitious front-of-house and technical staff. It appears mainly to suit people who are working at the equivalent of NVQ level 4 or higher.

The AMA has also been designed to suit individuals whether or not they get promotion. This means it doesn't explicitly assess the development of management competence and leadership abilities (although it does encourage people to reflect on their management role).

Large numbers have taken the AMA, and found it helpful to them in their career. At heart it is sound and effective. The MA is committed to reviewing the AMA and might usefully consider the following:

- There is not a case for a complete reinvention of the AMA. The basic framework is sound, although it could include additional criteria and might benefit from a slightly modular or two-stage approach to make it more accessible
- Currently, everyone taking the AMA needs a qualification – either university- or NVQ-based. There might be merit in replacing this with a system in which the AMA itself assesses an applicant's knowledge and competence. There may be lessons from ICON's accreditation system. An alternative suggestion is that all AMA applicants should take an NVQ
- Even though many people taking the AMA will not progress to leadership positions, all staff benefit from leadership (and management) skills. There should probably be an additional criterion to encourage this
- For some potential applicants the 'starting point' for the AMA appears to be too high. To increase accessibility it would be useful to consider ways of extending the relevance of the AMA so that it can support and recognise the development of museum staff who are not (yet) working at the equivalent of NVQ level 4
- This might also help make the AMA work better for people who enter the workforce through apprenticeship schemes and for recent entrants who are in temporary jobs
- The main focus of the AMA should remain broadly based, although there could be

an additional criterion to encourage applicants to develop in a specific area of museum work

- There might be a role for specialist groups or SSNs in developing specific training and development in their specific area
- Changes to the rules of the AMA could encourage more secondments so that people experience a wider range of museums and types of work
- The Museums Association needs to be clearer about the overall purpose of the AMA, both strategically in terms of sector workforce development and in terms of the specific benefits it is intended to have for individuals and their employers
- The AMA needs to meet employer needs (not least so that employers will support their staff in taking it)

11 What now?

11.1 It is intended that this report will be taken forward by the Museums Association, with the aim of preparing a realistic action plan. This will necessitate reducing the number of actions, prioritising those with the greatest chance of success. It is anticipated that the action plan will be published in 2008.

11.2 In the meantime, there are things that individual museums, museum-studies courses and sector organisations can do (and that some are already doing). There are many suggestions for action in:

- Section 9 Improving entry to the workforce, and in:
- Box B Improving volunteering and pre-entry work-experience
- Box C Improving museum-studies courses
- Box D Improving workforce diversity
- Box E Improving development in the first five years

The MA's role

11.3 There appears to be a broad consensus that improvements could be made to the ways in which people enter the museum workforce. There is a desire for change and the MA has a mandate to intervene and take a lead. Some constituencies, such as museum-studies courses, may be a little resistant to change but in general the work appears likely to interest younger members, and is also of interest to many museum managers. It also gives the MA an opportunity to engage with HR professionals in central areas of their work (recruitment and development) in addition to the more challenging areas we have previously prioritised, such as diversification and pay. A wide consideration of entry to the workforce also offers the MA a strategic framework in which to consider the future of some of its key activities, particularly the AMA, Diversify and careers advice.

11.4 The main task facing the MA is to build as much of a consensus as possible about the actions that are likely to be the most achievable and will deliver the most benefit. Some of these actions might be undertaken by the MA. The MA needs to decide, for example, whether it can have a significant role in pre-entry work and whether it is desirable and feasible to introduce a support scheme for new entrants. It needs to decide what priority it wants to give to developing subject-specialist knowledge, as that is an issue that needs consideration at all points of a curator's career – not just at entry-level. The MA is already committed to reviewing the AMA and some initial thoughts about the review are suggested in Box F. Many of the actions would need to be undertaken with partners or by other organisations and a big part of the MA's work will be seeing what activities other organisations might be willing to undertake or support. Key routes for implementation of some actions include CCS's Creative Knowledge Lab and Renaissance in the Regions.

11.5 The MA has already agreed to establish a consultative forum to inform the next stage of the work. Most people on the forum will be there as

individuals, but it will be useful to have people on the forum from a few key sector organisations, such as MLA, SMC, CyMAL and NIMC, CCS, and possibly HLF, AHRC and people who can speak on behalf of the hubs and the nationals. It might be appropriate to have a significant involvement by the MA's development officers for Scotland and Wales.

11.6 I suggest that the MA also hosts symposia or conferences with each of:

- Museum-studies courses and a selection of employers
- Museum HR staff and managers with an interest in training and development
- Recent entrants and people in junior posts

11.7 There is a shortage of reliable data and the MA might want to lobby for (or fundraise for) research into, for example, a tracking survey of new entrants that would give an indication of the employment success of museum-studies courses and give reliable data on other entry routes.¹⁵⁶

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Comments, responses and information

This research has been informed by comments from and discussions with a great many people. I received over 100 written comments and have endeavoured to include them all here together with a selection of meetings and discussions. I apologise to any I have omitted. People's institutional affiliations are given only when they wrote formally on behalf of that organisation.

Discussions at meetings with

Caroline Collier and Cheryl Richardson, Tate
Sarah Staniforth, National Trust
Staff of Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester
Staff of ICCHS Department, University of Newcastle
Museums Association Council
Museums Association Professional Development Committee
Recognised Courses Group
Creative and Cultural Skills Cultural Heritage Panel
Stephanie Giluly, Lincolnshire Museums
Midland Federation of Museums and Art Galleries
Museums Association Conference 2006
Coordinators of AMA support groups

Written Responses to Questionnaire to university museum-studies courses

Yvette Staelens, Bournemouth University
Mary Dines, Vicky Woollard and Jo King, City University
Matthew Poole and Linda Appleby, University of Essex
Alix Slater, University of Greenwich
David de Haan, Ironbridge Institute, University of Birmingham
Richard Sandell, University of Leicester
Helen Rees Leahy, University of Manchester
Neisha Nicholson and Andrew Newman, University of Newcastle
Neville Stankley, Nottingham Trent University
Annette Carruthers, University of St Andrews
Angharad Thomas and Debra Leighton, University of Salford
Mary Brooks, University of Southampton
Suzanne Keene, University College London
Nichola Johnson and Angela Larke, University of East Anglia

Written responses to consultation paper

Freda Matassa
Richard Sandell, for Department of Museum Studies,
University of Leicester
Isobel Churcher, for Birmingham Museum and Art
Gallery
Kirsten Walker
Robin Holgate
Girish Sethna
Kirsten Holmes
Rhi Smith
Gwylan Williams, Amgueddfa Cymru – National
Museum Wales
Robert McDermid, West Midlands Skills Action Group
Eleanor Moore, Rhiannon Johns and Melissa Bentley
Steve Slack
Anne Murch
Jane Walton
Catherine Price
Ruth Smith
Kristen Lippincott
Peter Turvey
Caroline Dudley
Rachel Cockett
Emma Poulter
Kathy Gee
Sara Selwood
May Redfern
Margaret Greeves
Alastair McCapra and David Leigh, Institute of
Conservation
Dawn Owen
Patricia Francis
Fiona Macalister
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Sheila McGregor
Deborah Skinner
Suzanne Keene
Nick Lane
Cynthia Brown
Caroline Collier, Tate
Ylva Dahnsjo
Angharad Thomas
Ian Carridice and Annette Carruthers

Participants in symposium, 30-31 March 2006, University of East Anglia

* = also sent written comments

Mark Suggitt*
Rita Mclean
Sarah Staniforth*
Vicky Woollard
Andy Bodle*
Heather Broughton*
Janet Vitmayer
Kate Carreno
Lloret Kemplen
Victoria Pirie
Nick Lane
Roy Clare
Steve Garland
Vanessa Trevelyan*
Alison Hems
Diane Lees*
Jim Forrester
Nichola Johnson
Nikola Burdon
Nick Winterbotham
Sally MacDonald*
Terry Turner
Veronica Sekules
Virginia Tandy*
Caroline Collier*
Chris Fardon
Marion Budgett
Helen Wilkinson
Kate Dunk
Nick Merriman
Sara Holdsworth
Tony Butler*
Alex Walker*
Bridget Yates
Hedley Swain
Joanne Orr
Margaret Greeves
Mark Taylor
Caitlin Griffiths

Other written comments received

Rae Robinson
Emma Webb
Iain Wheeldon
Tina Pittock
Jenni Adam
Giles Standing
Karen Spry
Stacy Braine
Michael Byrne
Louise McCall
Jason Finch
Iain Kimber
Sujata Gopinath
Duncan Flatman
Jo-Ann Lloyd
Ali King
Emma Sealy
May Redfern
Dee Connolly
Laura Coutts
Katherine Rose
Peter Davies
Paul Barrell
Rhi Smith
Lauren Soutar
Laura Broadhurst
Helen Batchelor
Laura Davis
Jennifer Brown
Catherine MacCarthy
Jane Arthur
Margaret Procter
Edwina Stitt
Holly Beckett

Letters for publication in response to Museums Journal May 2006 article (some unpublished)

Michele Scott
Simon Knell
Lauren Woodward
Alex Rowe
Ruth Ashburner
Zoe McFerran
Michelle Oskoui
Shirley Eaton
Susan Faulkner
Paul Barrell

Key conclusions of Professionals for the future: a symposium of entry-level training, March 2006

Museum employers at the symposium agreed:

There is a large supply of good applicants for most entry-level jobs. Many have more experience than is necessary. This is a good thing for museums (although it means fair, effective shortlisting is difficult). Recruitment is problematic at entry-level in only a small number of areas (eg natural sciences).

There is insufficient diversity amongst applicants if the museum workforce is to represent the audience that museums serve.

People enter the museum workforce through a variety of routes. Many (perhaps half) of people appointed to entry-level posts do not have museum-studies qualifications.

Museum-studies qualifications are not essential. (Although they are sometimes a factor in shortlisting.) Practical experience, and demonstrable competence, however gained, is a more important factor for most employers.

There are too many people with museum-studies qualifications looking for entry-level jobs (but this is not a particular problem for employers as it gives them a large pool to select from).

Although the way of getting a first decent job appears chaotic to people seeking work, as there is no overall system, each museum has its own way of recruiting good people (although they would like a more diverse field of applicants).

There are many recruitment difficulties at junior- and middle-management levels. Many posts are hard to fill. There are not enough good applicants – either because people do not have the skills and experience necessary, because they lack the confidence to apply, or they are reluctant to take on more responsibility.

Training and development for staff in their first few years in post is patchy, apart from some major museums with good internal development programmes.

Museums (and networks) have a responsibility to support and develop staff in a structured way in their first few years in post.

Museums, individually and as a sector, want to do more to ensure the future quality of the workforce.

Formalised partnerships between museums and museum-studies courses would improve pre-entry training and bring benefits for museums, students and courses.

Pre-entry training needs a large component of work-experience. The short placements offered as part of most courses are of little value to students and a chore for most employers.

Traineeships combining extensive work-based experience (possibly paid) and university-based training are desirable.

Improvements to pre-entry volunteering, work-experience and work placements could give a better experience to individuals, be better for museums and increase the diversity of people interested in museum work.

There should be transparent systems for allocating internships and pre-entry volunteering opportunities.

Appendix 1 Museum-studies courses 2005/6: Report of a survey

Appendix 2 Comments from individuals and employers

Appendix 3 Advice for individuals

In separate files

Notes

¹ Understanding the Future response

² Over 30 people sent me details of their personal experiences of trying to get a job in the museum sector, often quite painful. For a selection of their comments see appendix 2

³ ME

⁴ 'Oversubscribed' creative and cultural sectors include publishing, journalism, visual arts, broadcasting, film, fashion. Cohen, 2006, p35 writes of a fictionalised job-seeker in the 'glamorous world of media London': 'She found that in order to gain admission she needed to have taken and funded not only a first degree but a postgraduate degree as well. After she had paid for her own training, she discovered, she still wouldn't get a job that would let her begin paying her bills. Instead she would have to endure what employers quaintly describe as "work-experience", a refined version of slavery. The deal is that she works for nothing for six months, a year or however long it takes for an employer to condescend to hire her... those without a private income cannot afford to live without a wage as a rule... In the culture industries... it helps to have a mummy with a spare flat in South Ken, and if her friends are your prospective employers, all the better.'

⁵ Simon Knell, director and head, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, *Museums Journal*, July 2006, p14

⁶ HT

⁷ An interesting comparison: two local authority museums recruiting documentation staff. One sought generalist staff and from them have 'grown our own specialists to cover the specific documentation fields (aviation, coalmining and costume among others) working alongside specialist curators as mentors. This approach has worked very well so far.' (Heather Broughton, Leicestershire Museums) The other specified the specialism they wanted documentation staff to have and while they had over 50 applicants for the social history post had far fewer from geologists (8) and entomologists (2). (Steve Garland, Bolton Museums) The depth of specialist skill required – and the time taken to acquire it – may be far greater in some specialisms than in others

⁸ In 2004 the East Midlands Hub advertised for education and learning staff. Salaries varied widely between different museums in the hub, as each post was part of the grading structure of the individual museum. The jobs specified very similar qualifications and experience and offered maximum salaries varying from just over £15,000 to almost £25,000. Information from Elizabeth Wilson, pers comm, 16 May 2006

⁹ Salary guidelines, 2007 update, internal Museums Association report, 2007

¹⁰ This list is drawn from comments at the employers' symposium and by respondents. It also draws on City University, 2006

¹¹ Respondent 18 commented that in academia 'individuals are rewarded for thinking that their individual point of view is the major contribution they can make' but in museums there is 'a consultative, team structure to daily-life and decision making...In museums we are all we.'

¹² Respondent 18

¹³ Respondent 16

¹⁴ Respondent 21

¹⁵ Galloway, 2005, pxvi

¹⁶ LS

¹⁷ Frances, 2006

¹⁸ At Manchester Art Gallery, 'Recruiting for education, exhibitions and some curatorial staff ...at the lowest grade in our structure, we attract a large number of candidates (40-90), some of whom are genuinely at entry-level, ie applying for first job, but many of whom are currently doing similar jobs elsewhere and have 2-5 years experience. We tend to recruit the more experienced candidates.' Virginia Tandy, written comments for employers' symposium, March 2006. At Tate 'for assistant curators we normally ask for two years of relevant paid work-experience and we receive between 100 and 200 applications. The applicants are on the whole highly qualified.' Caroline Collier, personal communication, 24 July 2006

¹⁹ QC

²⁰ Respondent 20

²¹ Caroline Arscott, Courtauld Institute speaking at Courtauld Institute 5 May 2006

²² Personal experiences are very varied. These three scenarios do between them probably cover the experience of the majority – but there are other experiences, especially among the many people who try to enter museum work after they have worked for some years in another sector, or as part of a career in, for example, marketing or community work, that includes museums, but is not restricted to them.

²³ This is anecdotal and has not been systematically researched. It is supported by data from the AMA which suggests that about 60% of people registered for the AMA have a museum-studies qualification recognised by the Museums Association; some of these will have taken the qualification part-time while in museum work.

²⁴ 'There is an over-supply of graduates in this sector [creative and cultural industries] and paradoxically an undersupply of people with the right skills entering the profession.' Creative and Cultural Skills, 2005, p2

²⁵ SS

²⁶ Holmes, 2005

²⁷ Respondent 35

²⁸ Galloway, 2005, pxv

²⁹ ED. In similar vein: 'I am ... very aware that I could not be here without the financial and moral support of my family... If you step back to look at it, it is pretty illogical to not only forgo up to seven years of earning, but to actually pay thousands of pounds to get you there, and then to have no guarantee of a job, a salary that you could easily earn with a few basic admin qualifications... and very little respect, just for the love of it!' (LT) And again: 'While volunteering 'I ended up having to work in a supermarket at evenings and weekends ... I was lucky in that I was able to move back home so did not have to pay rent.' (LS)

³⁰ AN

³¹ Respondent 17

³² Christie's offers 6-month graduate internships paid at around minimum wage. Sotheby's and Bonham's internships are unpaid

³³ Respondent 39

³⁴ Respondent 6

³⁵ Galloway, 2005, p62

³⁶ Respondent 33

³⁷ I received comments from people who obtained volunteer work in prestigious museums thanks to, for example, contacts from Oxford University. (KB) A few years ago I arranged work-experience for a relative. Some curatorial departments in larger museums receive a few offers of volunteer work each day. (Comment by Beth McKillop, V&A at Courtauld Institute 5 May 2006)

³⁸ 'It may... be the case that students from families with social or professional contacts with those working in the professions are more able to secure work-experience... than those students from families who do not have these contacts.' Langlands, 2006, p94. Also see Cohen 2006 (cited above, note 2)

³⁹ Holmes, 2005. Institute for Volunteering Research, 2005 cites a paper that gives six primary motivations for volunteering, of which 'the career function, which enables volunteers to learn new skills' is a specific reason distinct from, say, social

⁴⁰ Roundhouse Studios director Elizabeth Lynch quoted in Lewis, 2006

⁴¹ Holmes, 2005

⁴² Respondent 11

⁴³ Zebra Square, 2006. The aim is to establish three pilot sets of work placements in Summer 2007 and to prepare guidance for employers to maximise the effectiveness of the work placement for the individual and the organisation

⁴⁴ Respondent 16

⁴⁵ Respondent 11

⁴⁶ Respondent 12

⁴⁷ LLUK; information from respondent 15 who says 'the sector needs support in ensuring that voluntary work is of good quality and I believe that this is a role for the sector skills council.' MLA is doing this for under 16s; see above.

⁴⁸ The consultation's suggestion of 'frameworks, advice, systems or standards' led a few respondents to fear 'more paperwork', any guidance or models should perhaps aim to be supportive rather than prescriptive.

⁴⁹ '[The] spectacular recent expansion [of universities] has been achieved less by avoiding market forces than by exploiting them. Demand for universities' teaching has been multiplied by absorbing professional training ... that once took place outside them and by creating a range of "social sciences" [such as museum studies?] that could only survive inside them. This absorption has been promoted by adding theory-based knowledge to professional... knowledge, whose acquisition then requires degree-level study. Fast growing areas of media, technology and cultural study have been "academised" to ensure that those who want careers in them must first go to college.' Shipman, 2006, pp18-19

⁵⁰ Tony Butler, Museum of East Anglian Life, symposium written comments

⁵¹ Comments I've received show that different employers want very different things from museum-studies courses. Some want theoretical underpinning, others want management competences and political skills, others very practical skills like documentation, preventive conservation and health and safety. Research for City University's Department of cultural policy and management made a similar observation: 'while some consultees thought it appropriate to teach practical skills such as budgeting, presentation skills and writing press releases, others thought the focus of a masters degree should be on: stimulating students' curiosity; increasing their understanding of the political, social and economic context in which they are, or might be, working; and enhancing their creative, conceptual, planning and analytical skills.' City University, 2006, p3

⁵² Respondent 10

⁵³ Richard Sandell, University of Leicester, pers comm, march 2007

⁵⁴ The Langlands report on universities as gateways to the professions noted a significant difference between what universities thought they should teach and what employers and professional bodies thought was needed. Some employers and professional bodies see universities 'as being out of touch with the realities of key professions and failing to provide the training that is needed.' Langlands, 2005, p91

⁵⁵ Galloway, 2005, pxvi. Also see pp68-9

⁵⁶ This example, pers comm. with lecturers on Newcastle course, August 2006

⁵⁷ Richard Sandell, University of Leicester, pers comm, March 2007

⁵⁸ Respondent 23

⁵⁹ Respondent 26a

⁶⁰ Respondents 16 and 17.

⁶¹ Understanding the Future response

⁶² The basic concept of a 4-8 week placement appears to be flawed. It is not long enough to allow a student to get a real feel for the organisation and it is usually tied to a specific project and so unable to give experience of a full range of museum work. In addition, museum hosts have many horror stories about students on placement being badly supervised by their universities. At the very least hosts expect a clear agreement with the course and the student on the content of the placement and a visit from a university tutor during the placement. Hosts have to take more responsibility to ensure the work-experience is worthwhile, too. Some of the placement proposals from museums to courses I have seen are excellent – well thought through with clearly specified outcomes for the student and the museum, but others are extremely vague. A survey found: 'respondents reported that it was their professional duty to assist aspiring museum professionals [but] 54% stated that they would like additional support to enable them to do so. Most commonly they requested this from the university or college whose students they were hosting as part of a work placement... There was also concern that [individuals] had unrealistic expectations of what they could, or would, be able to do... [One] manager felt that universities did not manage museum-studies students' expectations very well.' Holmes, 2005. However, Iain Wheeldon of Newcastle University reports that '93% of this year's cohort agreed or strongly agreed that the placement significantly increased their employability.' Pers comm, 15 August 2006

⁶³ Hale, 1987, p54

⁶⁴ Hale, 1987, p53. I'm grateful to Kirsten Holmes for drawing this to my attention

⁶⁵ 'In 2003, around 320 workers joined the Hertfordshire cultural industries sector from full-time education; but in the 2002/3 academic year, around 4,800 learners signed on for courses relevant to the sector.' Hertfordshire Business Link and LSC, cited in Creative and Cultural Skills, 2005, p2

⁶⁶ Course questionnaire response 8

⁶⁷ St Andrews, University College London and University of East Anglia

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- ⁶⁸ ED
- ⁶⁹ BS
- ⁷⁰ Ruth Ashburner, letter to *Museums Journal*, June 2006, p16
- ⁷¹ Iain Wheeldon, Newcastle University, personal communication 15 August 2006
- ⁷² Respondent 2
- ⁷³ Respondent 33
- ⁷⁴ Newcastle University, nd
- ⁷⁵ Zebra Square for MLA, 2005, p37
- ⁷⁶ Respondent 7
- ⁷⁷ Respondent 7
- ⁷⁸ Respondent 33
- ⁷⁹ Course questionnaire response 7
- ⁸⁰ Course questionnaire response 10
- ⁸¹ Unpublished analysis of destinations of Diversify participants
- ⁸² A further 4% had positive-action grant funding through Diversify or similar schemes
- ⁸³ The European Commission adopted a proposal for a European Qualifications Framework in September 2006. The proposal could be confirmed by other EU institutions in 2007, with member states then restructuring their qualifications. Information from Patrick Boylan to ICTOP listserv, 15 September 2006
- ⁸⁴ The benefits of closer employer/course relationships and partnerships are generally recognised. 'Effective partnership working would ensure that graduates were fit for purpose, the curriculum was kept up to date, students had access to work practice, and academic tutors were able to keep up to date through continuous professional development. Partnership working also provides the opportunity to develop more flexible routes into the professions which are more likely to be successful in attracting non-traditional students.' Langlands, 2005, p91. The government agrees: 'A system more responsive to the needs of employers and their workforce would help employers meet their higher level skill requirements, whilst at the same time providing opportunities to encourage more co-financed provision... Better links between employers and higher education institutions are key in moving towards responsive higher education provision.' DfES, 2005, p9
- ⁸⁵ Respondent 21
- ⁸⁶ Several lecturers, many of whom have previously worked in museums with under-trained colleagues, usefully warn about the continuation of institutional bad practice and narrowness of view that could arise if museums trained entry-level staff entirely in-house without adequate reference to the wider museum sector and contextual issues.
- ⁸⁷ Almost all Diversify trainees completing up to 2005 have secured a reasonable job in the sector (one in libraries) or gone on to a PhD. (The picture for Diversify bursary holders, who take a course full-time, is not quite so good.)
- ⁸⁸ As far as first degrees are concerned: 'The international experience suggests that where variable fees are at their highest, students choose degrees which lead to careers with a high rate of economic return. This has led to an increase in popularity of courses in business and management and degrees linked to the health and education professions. The arts, humanities and theoretical sciences have tended to suffer.' Langlands, 2005, p87
- ⁸⁹ A collaborative approach by museum-studies courses could achieve a lot. There are many models. The Higher Education Academy supports 82 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (none of which cover museum studies, presumably because there has never been a successful application from museum-studies courses). The Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning has funded 164 projects since 1995, including LIMES – Library Information Management Employability Skills, a two-year curriculum development project and a partnership of three library and information science university departments, that will create learning and teaching materials that reflect current employability skills in the library and information management sector and embed them into the curriculum. (I am grateful to Chris Fardon for drawing this to my attention.) Eight arts and cultural management university departments in London have formed the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise, funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund (which has funded over 60 collaborations between higher education institutions since 2001), to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise with the arts and cultural sectors. Its first aim is to foster dialogue and debate between higher education and the arts and cultural industries. Collaboration does not

necessarily require external funding. The archives training courses work together, and engage with the archives sector, as FARMER.

⁹⁰ Among the 50 or so people who apply for each entry-level job there are almost certainly people from 'non traditional' backgrounds without extensive museum experience or a museum-studies qualification but with the potential to have a successful museum career. They are, however, unlikely to get shortlisted when employers use strict selection criteria such as prior voluntary experience or a particular type of qualification. In addition some recruiters can feel overwhelmed by the large numbers and in practical terms can't see ways of exploring the potential of a large number of applicants

⁹¹ As at the beginning of 2007, 77 people had taken part in Diversify. Of these, 37 were still training, 32 had jobs in the sector (some temporary), 4 were doing PhDs, 3 are seeking work and 1 has dropped out of museums

⁹² See appendix 1, section 3

⁹³ In a 2005/6 Museums Association survey of hub museums only 2.6% of senior managers and 4.9% of staff working with collections were from minority-ethnic backgrounds, compared to 8% of the UK population as a whole. Because the museum workforce is small, only a few hundred people from minority-ethnic backgrounds would need to enter suitable jobs in the sector to dramatically improve the percentage representation

⁹⁴ There is some speculation about why so few men seem to be interested in museum work. Formal research might be useful. As far as their participation in museum-studies courses is concerned, in 2002 Nichola Johnson suggested to the MA recognised courses that they might explore points such as: whether the number of men accepted onto courses reflects the numbers applying, differences between the 'quality' of male and female applicants, differences between professional aspirations articulated by men and women at entry-level, whether men favour some postgraduate courses over others (Copy of proposal in MA files)

⁹⁵ The Museums Association is to begin work to extend the Diversify model to people with disabilities, with the help of funding from the former Museums and Galleries Disability Association.

⁹⁶ Respondent 9. The Diversify scheme has been criticised because it doesn't attempt to broaden the socio-economic profile of people entering the workforce (see Afridi, 2005)

⁹⁷ Certainly low pay puts some people off museum work and may be of greater significance for people from poorer backgrounds: 'For students that cannot rely on either parental or state support, the economic return for undertaking a long period of study, accumulating a high level of debt, and the prospect of a low starting salary, may result in them deciding to undertake a career with a better return.' Langlands, 2005, p88

⁹⁸ Zebra Square, 2005 and Global Graduates, 2005

⁹⁹ By their nature traineeships have different requirements to entry-level jobs and can open up the range of people employers shortlist (although entry is so competitive that many people who get traineeships in fact have prior experience). Because they suit a wider range of people, traineeships usually attract even more applicants than entry-level jobs – but this is probably normal in graduate traineeships in many sectors

¹⁰⁰ Hale Consulting, 2006, p30. One recent museum-studies graduate now working in museums says 'I learnt most of what I need to know and currently use from my voluntary experience rather than my MA, and my having an aptitude and belief system that is compatible with the current climate and work. I would even go so far as to suggest that it may not actually [be] necessary for museum professionals to be so highly (and traditionally) educated.' (LT)

¹⁰¹ Personal communication 12 July 2007

¹⁰² The importance of NVQs is perhaps underestimated. In 2005 over 400 people achieved cultural heritage NVQs: 287 at level 2; 85 at level 3; 32 at level 4 and 2 at level 5. These figures are for full NVQ qualifications; in addition people take single units. Trevor Meakin, Education Development International, pers comm, 4 August 2006

¹⁰³ Respondent 10. At the employers' symposium there was discussion of training routes that can take people from front-of-house to back-of-house jobs. Front-of-house staff are generally more diverse in background (especially class) than back-of-house staff and in general internal progression was seen to be a good way of bringing in a wider range of people to a wider range of museum jobs, with the proviso that it mustn't devalue front-of-house work, which is an important role in its own right and should not be seen primarily as a stepping stone to something else. The need for more internal progression routes is also noted in a report

commissioned by ALM London: 'there is no systematic pathway for staff at level 2 to progress though to professional grades. The creation of clear pathways of educational progression is a first step in encouraging new entry routes.' Diversify Matters, Hale Consulting for ALM London, February 2006, p13.

¹⁰⁴ National Museum Directors' Conference, 2006

¹⁰⁵ Respondent 20

¹⁰⁶ From September 2007, schoolteachers start on a minimum of £20,000 pa, with progression to £31,500 pa within six years (up to £6,000 pa higher in inner London)

¹⁰⁷ Entry-level curators in natural science and technology seem to be particularly hard to find. Some museums reported difficulties in recruiting decorative art and costume/textile curators, but these were generally at a level higher than entry-level.

¹⁰⁸ Holmes, 2005

¹⁰⁹ 'Perhaps we should begin to develop postgraduate programmes that place students in museum collections from the outset...' Johnson, 2005

¹¹⁰ Mary Anne Stevens of the Royal Academy, speaking at a meeting at the Courtauld Institute, 5 May 2006

¹¹¹ Respondent 18

¹¹² The V&A runs masters courses with the Royal College of Art to 'continually train new generations of curators, conservators and researchers' (Understanding the Future Response, 2005). The Natural History Museum 'actively develop[s] pre-entry skills for certain areas of museum activity by collaborating with universities on masters and doctoral education.' Partners include Imperial College, Reading University and UCL. 'Masters students develop skills in systematics and biodiversity conservation... some of the doctoral students will eventually be employed as [Natural History Museum] staff.' The Natural History Museum 'would like to develop collaboration with professional museum-studies training, but the pool of potential employers is small for natural history specialists... the number of [museum-studies] students wanting to specialise in natural history is relatively small.' (Understanding the Future response, 2005). Some museums, such as Bolton, have considered establishing traineeships so that natural history graduates can be trained in museum studies. The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester finds it 'difficult to recruit to some of our curatorial positions' and so works with the University of Manchester Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, which is linked to the university museum-studies department, to create a traineeship and also to provide work-based projects for masters students. (Robin Holgate, pers comm, 20 July 2006)

¹¹³ University College London, Understanding the Future response.

¹¹⁴ Collections for the Future noted many problems with developing specialist knowledge. At present many young curators are generalists or move across different subject areas and don't seem to develop enough subject knowledge to get senior curatorial jobs. Conversely, many staff who specialise early fail to develop management and leadership skills. In most museums it is vital that they are excellent communicators, too. There might be a role for the AMA and there is potential for specialist mentoring and also for links with universities. There are other issues to consider here. 'The assimilation of object-based knowledge ... comes most easily in the context of apprenticeship to a skilled and generous tutor. Such practical initiation is far more substantial than mere internships, but it would need to be balanced by the structured acquisition of generic skills, understanding of learning theory and development of an open, self-analytical and politicised professional approach... We need to take a hard look at what kinds of object-based scholarship we think we need... Next, we might consider if a single individual could offer that knowledge. In many museums, conservators and those closely involved in education are likely to have a greater understanding of the potential of individual objects than the ostensible experts.' Johnson, 2005

¹¹⁵ Respondent 15.

¹¹⁶ Respondent 10

¹¹⁷ Understanding the Future summary of responses

¹¹⁸ Understanding the Future response

¹¹⁹ Tyne and Wear Museums recruited for about 125 posts between 2004 and 2006. It failed to fill, or had to readvertise for six posts: principal collections and exhibitions officer, hub education manager, keeper of archaeology (pre history), curator Arbeia Roman Fort, principal communications manager and accountancy assistant (Peter Cartman, pers comm, 15 May 2006; Norfolk Museums has had to readvertise posts of interpretation manager and costume

and textile curator (Jo Warr, pers comm, 17 May 2005). Management-level recruitment difficulties reported at the employers' symposium on 30 March 2006 included: museum manager for a small museum, exhibition manager, management roles in education and interpretation, head of live interpretation, access and inclusion manager, access and learning project manager, middle-management conservator, building manager, marketing manager, fundraiser with museum experience, senior costume curator and keeper of fine art.

¹²⁰ Respondent 20. Analysis of interest in vacancies in Museums Association e-mail newsletters shows, for example in January 2006, about 3x to 5x more interest in entry-level jobs than in management jobs

¹²¹ It is possible that people who enter the sector lack the potential to progress; however, employers rejected this proposition at the employers' symposium. Adrian Babbidge thinks that there may be a problem with the types of people who enter the sector and that there are not enough potential directors of trust museums: 'Valuable though [leadership development] initiatives are, they presuppose the skills criteria used in recruiting for museums at entry-level are likely to recognise people with the acumen, temperament, aptitude and confidence necessary to run what is, in effect, a small business. Job descriptions, experience and anecdote suggest that basic business skills are not sought on entry to the sector, and that it is hard to build confidence in those areas (rather than in generic public sector management skills) later in people's careers. The consequence of this is that the pool of people with the wherewithal to be effective chief executives of museum trusts is limited. The smaller devolved museums should be the breeding ground for the next generation of directors of large institutions, but this does not appear to be the case... It is recommended that MLA should investigate whether the nature of entry-level job descriptions and specifications discourage people with the aptitude, skills, temperament and acumen necessary to manage museums on a business-like basis.' Babbidge, 2006, p112

¹²² Respondent 15

¹²³ Understanding the Future response

¹²⁴ Respondent 36

¹²⁵ Respondent 19

¹²⁶ Respondent 23

¹²⁷ Respondent 18

¹²⁸ Respondent 35

¹²⁹ Murch and Millman, 200X

¹³⁰ Respondent 5

¹³¹ Respondent 23

¹³² Respondent 15

¹³³ This has become evident in implementing the Diversify scheme. The V&A made a similar comment in response to the first DCMS Understanding the Future consultation. The West Midlands Hub is responding by introducing an Introductory Certificate in First Line Management

¹³⁴ Respondent 33

¹³⁵ Respondent 15

¹³⁶ Respondent 23

¹³⁷ Respondent 20

¹³⁸ Respondent 6

¹³⁹ Respondent 18

¹⁴⁰ Respondent 21

¹⁴¹ MD

¹⁴² MT

¹⁴³ MT

¹⁴⁴ Respondent 26a

¹⁴⁵ Information from Nikola Burdon, Museums Association

¹⁴⁶ ME

¹⁴⁷ MLA says that 580 jobs will have been created by Renaissance in the Regions by 2008

¹⁴⁸ Respondent 16

¹⁴⁹ The concept of 'leadership' appears to be less threatening to specialists than 'management'. Leadership can be practised from one's specialism, but management is often seen as something that threatens to take one away from it

¹⁵⁰ There are some successful museum staff who do seem to be simply what might be called museum generalists, or professional museum managers. They have excellent management and leadership skills and a wide understanding of all aspects of museum work. Generally these people are at director level – either head of a service or head of a museum or group of museums within a large service – and don't seem to need to maintain a specialism. However, these posts and people may be rather unusual. For most management-level jobs people do have to have a specialism as they are heading up a, usually small, specialist team or department (conservation, education, marketing, fine art, archaeology). While it is common for a generalist to be a museum director, it is not so easy, or even possible for them to become a head of a specialist department. This means that while those of exceptional generalist talent do make an early leap to director level, others get stuck as they do not have the requisite specialism to move to the 'next step' before moving on to a directorship. Hence the suggestion that most people need to develop a specialism as well as generalist skills.

¹⁵¹ Respondent 13

¹⁵² Sheila McGregor for West Midlands hub, Understanding the Future response

¹⁵³ Patricia Francis, pers comm, 13 March 2006

¹⁵⁴ Respondent 37

¹⁵⁵ Collections for the Future thought this might be one of the reasons for a decline in subject specialist expertise

¹⁵⁶ In principle it would be good to have reliable data on the backgrounds of people entering museum work, but thought would be given to how the data might be used and whether that would justify the cost of gathering the data