# REGENERATING A MUSEUM: REGENERATING A CITY

Mark O'NEILL

Glasgow is a city of 600,000 on the West Coast of Scotland, named in *The Lonely Planet Guide* for 2009 as one of the top ten tourist cities in the world. Part of its appeal is Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, which reopened in 2006 after a £30 million refurbishment, and which was the subject of a presentation to museum professionals at a conference in Bucharest in 2008. One of the reactions to the presentation was that Glasgow's experience was not a realistic model for Romanian museums, which do not have access to such funds and where tourism is not as developed as in the UK. Glasgow, however, shares the experience of a great many cities worldwide, an experience of industrial expansion in the 19th century and collapse in the 20th. In fact the decline in Glasgow was amongst the most extreme anywhere, so that by the 1980s the city had changed from being one of the great industrial centres of the British Empire, to being one of the poorest, most unhealthy and derelict cities in Europe – and, despite great improvements, it still suffers severe problems. There was a period in the 1960s and 1970s when it was assumed that the task of the City Council was to manage the decline of the city, as more and more people left for other cities in Britain or to move overseas. However, Glasgow City Council decided to fight back – one book about this period is called *The City That Refused to Die*. (Keating 1988). Part of this refusal was a decision to reinvent itself as a cultural tourist destination – an ambition mocked by many cultural commentators at the time. There are still many problems to be overcome, but the accolade of *The Lonely Planet guide* reflects the huge progress made in scarcely 25 years. (One of the lessons of Glasgow is that these changes take a long time – but not forever). Much of this regeneration has been driven by culture and by museums in particular – the city's Victorian collections were one of its resources and mobilizing them to benefit the present was a key strategy. The vision of museums in Glasgow is one where there is no necessary conflict between cultural, educational, economic and tourist objectives – arguments that museums are 'really' about one or other aspect of their complex roles are pointless. I hope this account of how one museum
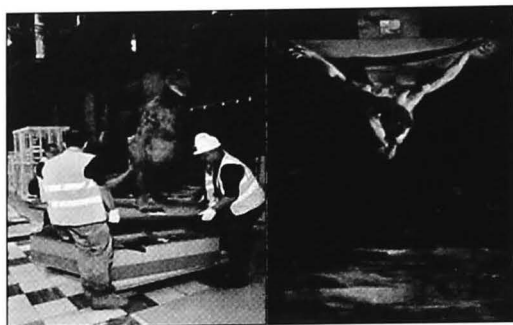
service engages with its city proves relevant to museum colleagues in Romania[1]. It aims to show that museums can engage – and in a democratic society must engage - with all of these agendas. We can do so with integrity, as long as we focus on the human stories embedded in the objects and create displays which are welcoming, and which respond to the deepest human needs for meaning and belonging.

So what is a museum? The ICOM definition of a museum states that it is "a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."

This is a completely circular definition, typical of professional, internally focused accounts of the roles of social institutions. If you don't know what a museum is or what it is for it, the ICOM definition tells you nothing. What kind of education? What kind of enjoyment? What kind of study? What kind of service – and in the support of what kind of society? And what constitutes heritage is an equally opaque question, especially now that it includes the tangible, as well as the intangible. Basically the definition says that a museum is an organization which carries out museum functions.

One of the assumptions of the ICOM definition is that museums can somehow avoid politics, by being bland and neutral. However, museums are not neutral organizations; they exist for political reasons – just like schools, hospitals and universities. They exist in order to pursue an ideal of a specific type of society. This ideal, these politics can be oppressive and impoverishing, or they can be liberating and enriching. This does not mean that the knowledge they produce in their researches should not aspire to scientific standards of accuracy, but that their social role is defined not by objectivity but by values, which can be authoritarian or democratic. The opposite of a politicised museum in a dictatorship is not a neutral museum, but a one which is an active agent in creating a democratic society.

As museums struggle in the competition for resources we often focus too much on the lack of money to carry out the basic functions of preservation, much less to deploy the wonderful modern technology to bring the objects to life. In other words we focus on our organizational and professional objectives and what we think we need to achieve them. The assumption, embodied in the ICOM definition, that everybody knows the value of museums is not only naïve and demonstrably wrong, but is the single greatest obstacle to enabling museums to flourish. In this case study of one museum in Glasgow, I want to argue

[1]For a general account of Kelvingrove's redevelopment see O'Neill (2007)
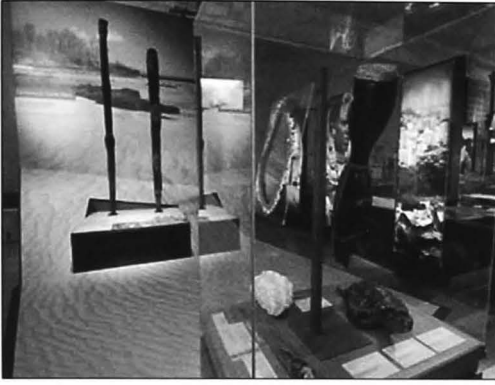
that the future of museums is not primarily about money, or about technology, it is about articulating a vision of how museums contribute to society, and developing a detailed, practical plan which demonstrates how that contribution can be made. Only then can museums make a case for the money needed for research, conservation, display and education. To get beyond the false choice between investing in a museum or a hospital, a museum or a school, we have to demonstrate that society needs museums as much as they need schools and hospitals - and make the case in the terms of society as a whole, not in terms of the professional, technical requirements of museums.

The renewal began in 1983 with the opening of the Burrell Collection – based on the art collection of one man, Sir William Burrell, which he gifted to the city in 1944. Many argued that it was wrong to spend £22 million on a new art gallery in such a poor city, and that Glasgow's aim of attracting tourists was, at best, naïve. During that decade the city's brownstone buildings were cleaned – revealing the best preserved Victorian city in Britain. In 1990, against all expectations, Glasgow won the title of European City of Culture – against competition for established 'cultural' cities like Edinburgh – and used it successfully to change or simply establish its international identity. The city – with typical energy and

ambition – was the first holder of the ECC title to run a 365 day festival, and the first to use it consciously to rebrand itself on the global stage.

The city continued to build on its cultural assets, refurbishing old and creating new museums which served local people, but were of a quality which also attracted tourists[2]. These deep local roots meant that they were not generic visitor attractions, but reflected the character of Glasgow, and were not seasonal, but part of the year-round life of the city. Thus, Glasgow created the first museum of world religions in the UK in 1993, drawing on its historic collection to create a tourist visitor attraction which also reflected the newly diverse communities in the city. In 1996 the Gallery of Modern Art opened. Since 2005 GOMA has achieved an international reputation for its biennial Human Rights and Contemporary Art programme. This comprises a major international exhibition and a city-wide programme of community engagement. The themes so far have been Asylum Seekers (2003), Violence Against Women (2005) Sectarian conflict between Catholics and Protestants (2007) and Lesbian and Gay culture (2009). These themes show that, as Glasgow works to secure its international reputation as a cultural centre, it is not sanitizing its history or denying its current problems and complex identities;

[2] For more information on Glasgow's family of museums see www.glasgowmuseums.com

it is trying to respond creatively, using the talent and collections in the city. Today Glasgow remains the poorest city in the UK, though much social regeneration has taken place. And it is also the third most visited tourist centre in Britain (after London and Edinburgh).
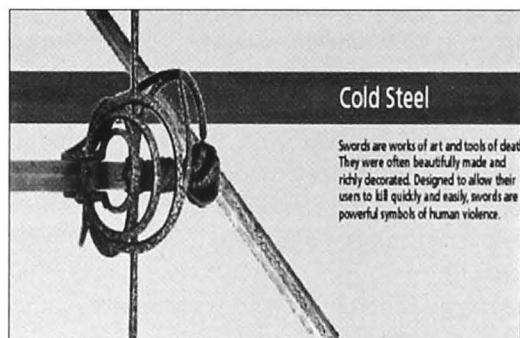
Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

Kelvingrove was the last and greatest achievement of the Victorian civic museum movement in Britain; it opened in 1901, and aimed to encompass the worlds of art, history and nature under one roof. Before it closed for refurbishment in 2002 it was the most visited museum in Britain outside London, with over 1,000,000 visits a year. About 30% of these were local people, reflecting a strong local tradition of museum visiting, and a sense of public ownership of museums amongst a wide range of social groups. 'Respectable' working class people as well as the middle classes felt that Kelvingrove was *their*. This tradition dated back to the Victorian origins of the museum, a time when those museums which took their civic educational role seriously were amongst the most democratic institutions in society. In 1901 only a minority of men and no women had the vote, free education finished at the end of primary school, but all were welcomed into Kelvingrove. Not spoiling the local sense of ownership this was a key aim of the refurbishment.

By 1990 Kelvingrove was looking sad and tired – one local paper called it 'Kelvingrave'. The roof leaked, the electric wiring hadn't been renewed since 1898, and the heating system failed frequently, creating temperature fluctuations which endangered the objects. Our first ever visitor research showed that even people who loved the museum thought that the displays needed to change, while tourists and young people thought that it needed a major overhaul. The displays were not only old-fashioned and, having changed haphazardly over the years were incoherent, and, in the words of one visitor 'actually made it difficult to learn'. Access for disabled people was totally inadequate, and shops, toilets and catering were, well, Victorian.

The Problem of Scale

Kelvingrove has 22 main galleries, over 8,000 square metres and showed over 4,000 objects, including Dutch and Italian Old Masters, French Impressionists and Post Impressionists, Scottish Fine and Decorative Art (including Charles Rennie Mackintosh), Scottish and Mediterranean archaeology, flora and fauna of Scotland, anthropology of cultures from Africa, Americas and Asia. This great variety was one of the most appealing aspects of Kelvingrove, but it also created the single greatest challenge – how to modernize the museum and ensure that it was meaningful for 21st century audiences. This wasn't made any easier by the fact that

Cold Steel

Swords are works of art and tools of death. They were often beautifully made and richly decorated. Designed to allow their users to kill quickly and easily, swords are powerful symbols of human violence.

we also had 1.4 million objects in store from which we could choose – though, typically, these were poorly documented, researched and stored[3].

Basic Assumptions
An Object Base Museum

The essence of museums is that they inspire appreciation and learning through real things. We wanted to introduce the best modern display methods – but not at the expense of objects. This is the basis of our commitment to double the number on display to more than 8,000.

A Visitor Centred Museum

Extensive consultation with visitors and non-visitors, as well as the latest psychology of communication and learning, inform the displays (Economou 2004). The explosion of knowledge in the 20th century meant that there was no such thing as 'common knowledge'. Combined with the vast range of material on display, this led us to the first principle we established for the new displays - that we would not assume any prior knowledge on the part of visitors. The museum aims to welcome every visitor no matter what their background and to provide a way in to understanding the wonderful objects on display. Individual visitors might be knowledgeable about a few aspects of the collection, but very few would be familiar with the entire range. The art aficionado might not need basic information about a painting, but she would for the geology display. The biologist might be at home in the wildlife gallery, but might need an introduction to the decorative art gallery. The labels provide a point of entry; many other means – books, website – provide additional information. The displays therefore had to provide a point of entry for people who were complete novices.

A Cultural Institution for the 21st Century

In the 21st century there is no single definition of culture. For the Victorian Scots - to oversimplify greatly – being cultured meant having a grasp of the histories and literatures of Greece, Rome and the Italian Renaissance and some knowledge of classical music, overlain with a Protestant ethos and a sense of British Imperial superiority. Today, Glasgow has citizens whose background was in other ancient civilizations – those of India or China for example, and for whom culture is jazz, or world music, or rock, or folk music. It was also impossible to using Victorian anthropological perspectives, of 'scientific' Europeans studying the quaint lives of 'primitive' peoples. The history of 'scientific' complicity in racism and oppression reinforces the point that the key vector of museum engagement with society is its values. (See, for example, Gould).

A Flexible Museum

We also wanted the museum to be flexible. Once a new display opens, it starts going out of date. After fifteen or twenty

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[3]Part of the Kelvingrove project not covered by this article was the removal of 100,000 objects from the basement to a new store in a one of the poorest parts of the city. This helped generate 2,000 additional square metres of public space in the museum. On the basis that this would be open to the public seven days a week, so that people could see their collections the city paid for a new building. The second phase of this is due to open in 2009, making a total of 18,000 square metres of publicly accessible museum storage.

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years it is seriously dated – it can often take decades before the huge sums can be raised to renew entire galleries, or entire museums. Changing sections of galleries may be possible, but the new elements often clash with the older displays. We wanted an approach that would enable the museum to evolve over time, making small changes which would enable it to remain up to date and respond to new discoveries and public interests.

A Storytelling Museum

Rather than summarise subjects (like Art History, Archaeology or Geology), the museum would tell the most interesting stories about the most interesting objects. By focusing on the strengths of the collection, we don't have to fill 'gaps' with graphics, computers or 'books on the wall'.
• As individual stories could be reinterpreted or replaced without disrupting large gallery sequences, this gave us the flexibility we were seeking. Changing one story would be many times cheaper than changing an entire gallery.
• As the stories were self-contained and based on our collection there would no 'gap-filling' required, and we could concentrate on those objects we did have.
• While entire disciplines would not be summarized, we could go into specific stories in more depth.
• It brings out best in collection, as we can focus only on the most interesting objects, rather than having to show material to follow a chronology or represent a discipline
• It builds on one of the main attractions of Kelvingrove – the variety of objects display.
• It can reflect interests and learning approaches of diverse public, within and between stories

By using narrative rather than the structure of subjects, the displays are able to function at many different levels – accessible to the novice, but resonant for the knowledgeable visitor. There were other advantages to the story approach.

To create memorable experiences we need to engage people's imaginations as well as their intellects. Above all storytelling works with people's imagination and inherent meaning-making capacity. Storytelling is how peoples' minds work, it is how we engage with the most basic questions of life and death, of individual identity and group belonging. Each of us is engaged in a constant process of telling and retelling our own story as we try to assimilate new experiences to previous versions of who we are and how the world works. At a cultural level this capacity for meaning making through narrative is what underlies the great myths and fairy tales, which often embody profound psychological truths as well as human fears and aspirations. If we want visitors to be stimulated by objects to imagine the past, to think about issues, to empathise with people who are different from them culturally or in terms of ability or disability, we have to tell the stories which the objects carry. Kelvingrove itself is a story Victorian Glasgow told itself about its place in the world. How were we to retell Glasgow's story for the 21st century?

One of the key advantages of the Story approach is that it enables us to cope with the reality of the diversity of people. The single insight which would most transform museums is if staff realized that other people are different - from each other, and above all from you. Most people assume unconsciously that most people's minds work the same way theirs does. People whose minds work differently appear contrary or stupid or are simply invisible: we usually find reasons not to take them

into account. For far too many museums the imagined visitor in the minds of the staff is a simplified, idealized figure, on a solitary visit with no family or friends and with a cultural background similar to their own. In fact people differ profoundly in how they see and understand the world. There are various theories about how people learn which can help museums think about how people differ, such as Kolb's learning styles or Howard Gardner's ideas of multiple intelligence (Kolb 1984, Gardner 1983). Though these have been criticised as lacking a sound empirical basis (see e.g. Coffield et al 2004), their practical utility is that they enabled museum staff to empathise with people who see the world differently – especially people who are not academics.

In order to create accessible displays we need to take into account not just this diversity of mental functioning, but the other ways in which our visitors vary – age, gender, cultural and ethnic background, sexual orientation, ability or disability, level of education and prior knowledge about the subject. The only way of coping with this complexity is to tell stories. Good stories can function at different levels for different people. Good stories engage the imagination, intellect, memories and emotions of visitors. Because of their psychological fit with the human mind, they can have rich resonances without requiring more detail than is possible in a museum. Stories inspire visitors to bring far more of their own meaning- making capacity to the museum objects and this makes our task easier. In fact it is only this capacity of visitors that makes our task possible at all; we need to work with it rather at cross-purposes to it.

Another major advantage of storytelling is that it creates dialogue within the museum, by bringing content and communication experts into communication with each other and with the public. The task of this new type of museum is to select the most interesting story arising out of the objects. The Victorians thought they could select the most interesting story for all time. Recent new museums, such as National Museum of Scotland (1999) the Islamic Galleries in the V&A (2007), think that their story will last for 25 or more years. The longer the shelf life, the more bland and unfocused the story, the more remote it is from any clearly imagined group of visitors. Different generations have different questions; research reveals new histories, so a flexible display system is crucial. Such a system enables the selection of the most interesting story for people now. This requires two forms of interdisciplinary working. First, content experts need to work together to establish the links between collections. This does not require curators to be experts across a whole range of disciplines. But they do need to know where their specialism fits in to the overall field of knowledge and to share authority with others who have different expertise. Second the expertise of the education and access curators and the learning we derive from visitor studies needs to be brought to bear. The staff who knows most about the objects may not be able to see, amidst the closely packed trees of their knowledge, the particular path through it which will engage the public's interest, the particular question which the public are most interested in. We have invested hugely in education and access curators not just to provide better services to schools and communities, but because their expertise is essential to the intellectual role of the 21st century museum. To tell a story effectively, we have to have as rigorous a knowledge of our audience as we do about the objects and above all these forms of knowledge have to be in constant dialogue.

Storytelling and Museum Research

Storytelling enables us to improve the quality of history in the displays. The use of the word 'story' may sound as if it involves an oversimplification, a reduction to the bare minimum, with children in mind. In fact storytelling is probably the only way that museums can communicate intellectually rigorous, analytical history. Most museum displays embody very poor quality history – not the history in the curators' heads, or even in the labels, but the history physically represented by the traditional groupings of objects in museums. The traditional taxonomy makes it virtually impossible to say anything intelligent about the past. David Hackett Fisher, in his book Historian's Fallacies, identifies several hundred of the most common mistakes made by members of the profession. The two most common errors perpetrated by museums are what he calls the Fallacy of Tunnel History and the Fallacy of Identity. The Fallacy of Tunnel History is the assumption that a meaningful representation of the past can be created by using only one type of evidence, despite it usually having been preserved by a 'ridiculously adventitious set of circumstances'. The rows of vehicles of the same type in museums of transport are perfect examples of this; you can't say very little meaningful about the history of locomotives by showing only locomotives. The Fallacy of Identity is a closely related error. It assumes that 'a cause must somehow resemble its effect'. The only real way of avoiding the Fallacy of Tunnel history and the Fallacy of Identity is to devise interdisciplinary interpretations, where a wide enough range of evidence is drawn upon to say something meaningful about the past. Drawing on different collections and types of expertise is more complex than tunnel history and requires a strong story to create coherence.

Storytelling Generates Knowledge

Stories are important because they force museums to create displays which in effect answer specific questions which arise out of the objects. The museum tradition of bland summaries of the available information about an object or category of objects is the ultimate intellectual deadener in museum displays. Storytelling stimulates questions which go beyond information to generate knowledge.

The traditional museum approach reflects an ideal of comprehensiveness which is closely related to the kind of obsessional collecting which can't accept a representative sample, and must always try to have the complete set. For some reason most museums are reluctant to answer the most basic question: Why is this object significant? The justification for not answering questions like these is that this would involve an element of subjectivity, a value judgment. But if the object is on display, then presumably somebody must have already made a judgment that it is important enough to be rescued from death, preserved for all time in public funded space and presented to the public for their attention. If the answer about why the object is significant is that it is number 479 out of a set of 1,000, and perhaps had a strong influence on the shape of number of 480, the visitor is more likely to feel pity than curiosity. The criteria of significance need to draw on a range of subjects outside the specialist tunnel. Luckily most objects are linked in complex ways with individuals and society and have far more interesting stories to tell – far more than can be told at any one time. Museums need to take responsibility for selecting which story is the most important for the present – the flexible system allows us to change it in the future.

Research based history can only be created by asking questions of the evidence that survives from the past. The sample of evidence required depends on the question. Without a question to being asked and answered a display may give information, but it does not communicate knowledge or encourage visitors to create knowledge for themselves from the display. Good questions are a great way of engaging the public's interest and curiosity. And storytelling enables the museum to answer questions in an open-ended rather than a closed way. The use of stories moved us away from the traditional approach, which would have been to allocate galleries (after a lengthy tug of war) to the traditional subjects: archaeology, art history, anthropology, natural history, arms and armour, and decorative arts.

This was not an ideology of change for its own sake – if the categories made sense to visitors, we retained them. Thus the displays are a combination of existing subjects (French Art, Dutch Art, Scottish Wildlife) and new themes, which represent groups of stories in the collection (Cultural Survival, Conflict and Consequences). Aiming instead only to show 'the most interesting stories about the most interesting objects' freed us from the oppressive ideal of comprehensiveness. This enabled us to work across the traditional museum taxonomies, or if those categories no longer made sense, to abandon them

Some museum staff and critics sneer at the visitor-centred storytelling approach as 'dumbing down'. In fact it is far more intellectually demanding (and enriching) for staff than the traditional approach. It is very easy to stick to derivative taxonomies, issue some basic information and ignore the audience as complex human beings. It is far, far more difficult to work across content and communication disciplines, to make decisions about the most significant stories inherent the objects and to engage the whole range of citizens who are potentially interested in the collections which we look after and display on their behalf. An object-based, visitor-centred, interdisciplinary storytelling approach will help us not only to improve the accessibility of our museums but also to improve the intellectual quality of our displays and enable museums to be centres of public knowledge rather than warehouses of objects and hoards of information.

Discovery Centres

In addition to the story displays, there are three Discovery Centres, one each for Art, History and Science. These involve intensive interactive approaches to display, especially suited to school and family learning. This is a well established as a way of improving understanding of science (e.g. The Natural History Museum in London) and history (e.g. The Smithsonian Institution's Hands on History centre and the Royal Ontario Museum Discovery Centre, and the Speed Museum in Louisville Kentucky's Art Discovery Centre.
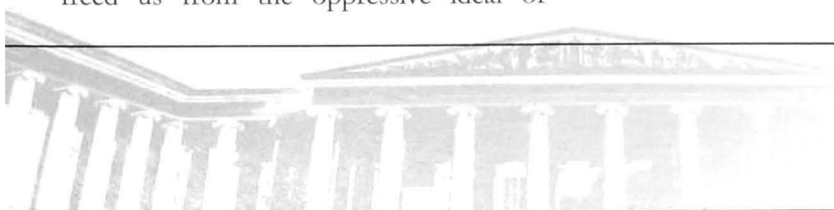
Architectural Strategy

The architectural strategy for Kelvingrove was simple: to restore it to its Victorian condition, while modernizing all the services for 21st century visitors, and 21st century technology. Over the years various galleries had been partitioned off to create offices, meeting rooms and education spaces. These functions were moved to new public areas created in what had been the basement store and these accretions removed, so that the original vistas and circulation patterns of the building were restored. These changes allowed more daylight into the building, and a new lighting scheme was installed to highlight the architectural features. The most striking change however was achieved by cleaning the beautiful blond sandstone, so that the building's original colour scheme can now be appreciated

Making the Case and Fundraising

Kelvingrove could have been renewed in a number of phases over decades (though this would have been technically difficult with issues like rewiring), but we were fortunate that we were able to raise the funds to do the work in a single project – though it took us 16 years to do so. This was due to the introduction of a national Lottery which funded arts, heritage and sports project in the UK in 1994 – this is something that Ministries of Culture should consider, as it provides an additional source of funds for projects which may find it difficult to compete with schools and hospitals for public money. Securing a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund was not easy however. Our first application was rejected in 1997. This was a devastating blow, not least because it came in the middle of a funding crisis for the city. Changes in Glasgow's boundaries meant that the city lost a third of its population – and a third

of its tax base. As a consequence, between 1995 and 1997, Glasgow museums lost a third of our staff and a third of our budget. Rebuilding the service took from 1998 to 2001 – when we finally got a grant of £12.8 million from the HLF.

We realised that the city could not find the rest of the funds required, so we needed a radical new strategy. Having studied how American fundraising works, we established a separate Charity, with its own board, which was chaired by a Conservative member of the House of Lords. This was a radical step, in a city where 69 of the 75 Councillors were from the Labour Party. However, the focus on Kelvingrove, the city's best loved building and favourite museum - which everyone agreed needed to be renewed - meant that cross-party co-operation began to work. Just as in the Victorian period, leading businessmen and women in the city contributed funds for public institutions, while Trusts and Foundations were given confidence by the unity of the city in working to restore its museum. For the first time we employed a professional fundraising team, paying market rates for four staff, with the Development Manager being a member of the Senior Management Team. They ensured that the fundraising aspects of the museum project were carried out at the same level of professionalism as the conservation, research and display. The Kelvingrove Refurbishment appeal raised about £13 million, £9 million from wealthy individuals and companies, and the remainder from Trusts and Foundations.

Despite this level of financial investment – and the great affection local people felt for the museum - we did not take the support for Kelvingrove for granted. In the five or so years up to reopening, staff working on the project spoke to every group and organization in and around the city. We spent many cold winter evenings

lugging projectors (this was in the days of 35mm slides) to church and community halls, speaking to women's guilds, mothers and toddlers groups, pensioners clubs, local history and archaeology societies, business associations. We briefed local and national politicians at every conceivable opportunity. Once the building work had started, we took potential ambassadors for the project behind the scenes, to generate interest and support. We ensured that the press had a regular supply of human interest stories and felt part of the project. By the time Kelvingrove opened, there was huge public interest and expectation, as well as an understanding of the radical approach we were taking to the redisplay.

Project Management

Each of the 8,000 objects had to be cleaned and if necessary restored, each had to have a new display mount designed and made. Keeping track of the objects as they were processed and then installed was in itself a mammoth task. Each object forms part of a story which needed to be written to rigorous standards of research and accessibility – the displays involve a total of nearly 150,000 words. To put the objects in their cultural or natural contexts nearly 10,000 photographs were selected and ordered from museums and libraries all over the world. No single display method was chosen – every story used the communication method which worked best for its content and its envisioned audience. Perhaps the greatest challenge was organizing the vast range of material and display approaches into a coherent whole, to ensure that the museum while celebrating the diversity of material and approaches, the museum had a sense of unity and implemented the agreed principles in a coherent fashion.

This task was allocated to a core Project Team, made up of a project manager, a senior curator, designer, conservator, educator and research manager. This group, with the support of the museum director, made all the key decisions – not the heads of traditional museum departments. This meant that, as well as coordinating the work of the architects, builders, external designers and many specialist consultants with the input of Council staff, they were able to ensure that every dimension of the new displays reflected the overall vision for Kelvingrove. While some staff found this difficult and a challenge to their professional status, it was essential both to ensure the delivery of the vision, but also to produce a restored building and new displays on what was effectively an industrial scale. The large commercial contracts meant that venerable museum traditions such as missing deadlines, changes of mind about objects being included, and postponing final decisions, had to be abolished, as they cost money. Ultimately the project came in on time and on budget.

Conclusion

In its first year after opening, Kelvingrove received 3.2 million visits – between 20,000 and 25,000 a day for the first two months. Over 50% of the city's population visited on average 3.8 times. Over 100,000 schoolchildren received formal workshops – about 50% from the city, and 50% from the rest of Scotland. In 2007 Kelvingrove was the 14th most visited museum in the world, surpassing the Hermitage in St Petersburg and Uffizi in Florence.

We worked closely with the agency responsible for Glasgow's tourism, and about 1 million of the visitors were from outside Scotland. Though they of course contributed to the cities and the nation's economy, this is not how we thought of them in the museum – they were human

beings, with the same complexity, diversity and emotional and intellectual richness of response as local people.

Kelvingrove is not a museum in the mode of the ICOM definition. We do not carry out our professional functions and assume it will benefit society. We accept the requirement that we have to explain and justify ourselves in the public sphere. We have a vision of museums as an active agent, inspiring an increasingly democratic, thoughtful, creative and inclusive society through the aesthetic and intellectual power of objects. We work with our audiences as they really are, instead of projecting an idealised image of how objects should be displayed, so that our vision constantly undergoes reality testing. We wish to attract tourists but do not regard them as mere economic units, but as guests of the community who have as needs and interests as rich and complex as those of local people. It combines grand ambitions to change people's lives[4] – often in ways which are unmeasurable and difficult even to articulate – with constant reality testing to ensure it is connecting with people's lives. We see museums as publicly funded institutions which do not create unnecessary boundaries between different kinds of social value, but confidently generate the maximum benefit for their communities. This includes economic as well as cultural, social and educational value. 21st century museums need to be efficient and effective in deploying their resources, and above all focus on the humanity of visitors of all types and on the human meanings embedded in objects.

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[4] For the best – objective – research on the impact of museum visiting see Bygren et al (2009) Konlaan (2004) Hyyppa (2005) and Khawaja (2007)

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