

Guidance Sheet 2

Getting started for museums

Summary

Stronger relationships with the creative industries will benefit museums in Northern Ireland: the creative industries are of growing importance and their work is closely allied to museums, heritage and tourism.

The creative industries include 13 different sectors, from music and designer fashion, to the performing arts and digital media.

Working with the creative industries offers museums many benefits:

- The chance to grow their audiences
- Increase the use of their collections
- Change people's perceptions of the sector
- To generate income

Some people in the creative industries say that it can be hard to find out about what museums have to offer and what their collections contain. If your museum wants to work with the creative industries, think about ways of promoting this kind of information.

Organisations in the creative industries tend to be keen to try something new and are relatively fleet of foot. Some tend to perceive museums as being somewhat slow-moving and risk-averse. If your museum wants to work with the creative industries, be aware of these perceptions and remember to explain the constraints you work within (such as the need to care for collections, and to serve the public interest) which might be unfamiliar outside the sector.

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1 What are the creative industries and why do they matter to museums?

Museums have much to gain from building strong links with the creative industries: they are a growth area in Northern Ireland and their work is closely allied to museums, heritage and tourism.

Promoting innovation, research & development and creativity is a priority for the NI Executive and the creative industries are seen as important contributors to this. According to official definitions, there are thirteen sub-sectors which make up the creative industries:

- advertising
- architecture
- arts and antiques
- computer games
- crafts
- design
- designer fashion
- film
- TV and radio
- music
- performing arts
- publishing
- software/digital media.

What all these have in common is that their products have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and that they have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

Digital technologies are seen by policy makers as having most potential for growth and collaborations in these areas may be particularly advantageous: animation; mobile/web content; e-learning/serious gaming; publishing; film; television; and music.

2 The benefits of working with the creative industries

Museums have a lot to gain from working more extensively with the creative industries, including:

- **Increasing use of museum collections** Whether by providing evidence to help a documentary-maker tell their story, or by licensing designs for commercial products, partnerships with the creative industries have the potential to ensure that more people have more opportunities to enjoy your collections
- **Increasing use of the building** Museum buildings can be venues for the performing arts, or used as film and television locations. Some of these activities could generate income, while others help to demonstrate the importance of your museum as a local resource
- **Increasing use of your expertise** The specialist knowledge developed by people who work in museums is a public resource. Partnerships with the creative industries have the potential to bring this knowledge to a wider audience
- **Reaching new audiences** Creative industries may be able to help you reach audiences who are not attracted by more traditional ways of presenting museum collections. Different design approaches can appeal to different audiences, artists and makers can help you reinterpret your collection in ways that make people think again about an institution which they see as unchanging and uninteresting, and digital media offers ways of reaching people who are unlikely to visit the museum in person. Major film and TV productions in particular can offer a dramatic boost to visitor numbers: high-profile productions can boost visitor numbers by over 50% if publicised effectively
- **Raising the profile of the museum** Because working with creative industries is novel and eye-catching, it is relatively easy to get press coverage and generate interest in what you are doing. It can position the museum positively to be seen to have a close association with a growing, forward-looking sector
- **Generating income** Not all projects with the creative industries are geared towards income generation, but there is potential here for museums

3 How might you work together?

Most relationships between a museum and a creative business will fall into one of three categories:

Commissioning a service (and paying a fee) Museums already work extensively with creative businesses, commissioning designers to work on displays or marketing materials, hiring costumed interpreters or using a specialist company to develop a sound guide. Working with the creative industries is not a new idea. But it is likely that you could do more. If you already have a sound guide, could you develop an app? If you have sold a local maker's work in your shop, could you commission them to produce new work for display in the museum, in response to the museum's collection? And if you have a good relationship with a company as a client, could you look for ways of moving that relationship on?

Selling a service (and generating an income) Museum collections can offer inspiration for the work of artists and creative businesses and sometimes are suitable to be licensed for use on commercial products. Museum buildings have potential as film locations, or performing arts venues. There may also be scope to develop charged-for consultancy services, which draw on museums' expert knowledge. Museums traditionally provide many of these services for free, and should continue to do so for students or non-commercial ventures. But this guidance aims to help you generate income from these kinds of activities, where it is ethical and feasible to do so.

Collaborating as partners (could generate income in the longer term, be revenue-neutral, or have a cost for the museum) While museums and the creative industries have traditionally worked together as clients and service-providers, there is untapped potential for new kinds of collaboration. Creative industry partners can bring new ways of working to museums, which could generate commercial possibilities, or give scope to apply for funding to develop a programme or product, bringing together your museum's special resources and the creative-industry partner's specialist skills. Guidance Sheet 3 in this series has more information about funding opportunities.

Licensing and product development offer other opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration. Museums can license creative businesses to develop commercial ranges based on, or making use of, museum collections in return for a fee. Museum shops offer potential outlets for smaller-scale producers, which can generate income as well as improving the quality of experience for your visitors. Guidance Sheets 3 and 4 offer more advice on how to develop successful partnerships in these areas.

4 What to expect working with creative businesses

Many creative businesses are relatively small and fleet-of-foot. Their culture may seem very different to that of museums, and not only because they are driven by commercial imperatives. Research undertaken in developing this guidance identified that, whereas creative businesses are keen to try something new, experiment a little, and move on quickly if the innovation doesn't bear fruit, they perceive museums as often being slow-moving, risk averse, and yoked to long-term strategies. Museums would rightly argue that what may seem like negatives are in fact signs that they take their public responsibilities seriously, act

as good stewards of collections and – in the case of national and local authority museums – contribute to corporate priorities. When working with creative businesses, museums need to be open about what their obligations and responsibilities are, be flexible where they can be, and explain when they cannot.

To help make working with partners in the creative industries successful there are a few things to consider that might help ensure the project goes smoothly.

Remember that if you have never worked in or with a museum, they can be difficult places to understand in terms of how they operate and who does what. Spending some time at the start with partners to explain how the museum works, the different departments and protocols is essential. This will help them to understand how they can work with the collections, buildings and staff and what is possible.

Before starting work with people from the creative industries, it might be useful to try and understand what their perceptions of museums might be. This will not only help with managing the project and expectations throughout the process, it could also help to address any potential issues at the outset.

Recent research undertaken for NIMC with the creative industries showed that those who have had the chance to work with museums had a positive experience and would very much like to do so again. As well as the wealth of collections and interesting spaces museums have to offer, people valued the chance to work with subject specialists, to explore new working environments and the chance to work with the public.

The research also highlighted some potential concerns that the creative industries might have about working with museums:

- Finding a way in to a museum is hard, even finding someone to have an initial chat with can be very difficult
- Finding out what is in a museum's collection can be difficult, as is getting access to it
- Museums may be risk averse, whereas many in the creative industries work around a principle of innovation: trying new things and moving on quickly if they fail. These different approaches to work could cause tension
- Decision making in museums can be difficult due to bureaucracy, this may particularly be the case for local-authority museums. It could hamper collaborations
- In general museums are not necessarily engaged with the creative industries, they do not go to the same networking events so it can be hard to start conversations and relationships

5 Next steps

Here are a few things you can do to help get started:

- Talk to colleagues and look through your organisation's forward plan, think about projects that might benefit from being developed in collaboration or with input from one of the creative industries. If the project supports the organisation's business plan it will be far easier to justify time and resources for the work

- Decide on the terms in which you want to work with an organisation – as collaborators and partners or as service providers
- Do some research into organisations and businesses in the creative industries and try to identify some suitable collaborators or businesses you could work with (see below for contacts). Perhaps contact a few to have an initial chat
- Investigate the possibility of working with students on a university creative-industries course
- Look into potential funders for collaborative work, some sector bodies have funding streams which museums might be able to access if they are working in partnership with a particular sector
- Talk to other museums that might have done something similar, find out how it went and who they worked with
- Be proactive - think about what your offer to the creative industries could be and develop ways to promote and market this
- Identify potential events and networking opportunities where you might meet people working in the creative industries
- Remember that opportunities often arise 'out of the blue' so devise strategies and protocols that will be ready to use when the artist or film company does call

6 Details and contacts for individual creative industries and other resources

General information and contacts

Arts Council Northern Ireland

ACNI is the funding and development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. Find out about funding for opportunities to work with other areas of the arts from visual arts and design to performing arts and literature <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/>

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

DCAL is the NI government lead on the creative industries <http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/>

Creative and Cultural Skills (Northern Ireland)

CCSkills is the UK sector skills council for the creative and cultural industries <http://ccskills.org.uk/nations/northern-ireland>

My Creative Edge is an online directory of businesses working across the creative industries <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/>

Culture Northern Ireland is another source of contacts and inspiration <http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/>

Crafts and Visual Art

Distinctions between visual art, craft and design are becoming increasingly blurred, with the rise of digital technologies. Even in craft, which traditionally has an emphasis on the hand-made, a majority of makers now use some digital technology in their businesses. There are

approximately 1000 craft-based businesses in Northern Ireland; most are sole traders, producing works to sell by commission, in galleries and online.

Craft NI supports and promotes the craft industry in Northern Ireland. One way in which it does this is through its online directory of craft makers and examples of their work, which provides a useful guide to artists and makers that museums could work with

<http://www.craftni.org/>

Advice on working with craft makers is available in the Museummaker Toolkit

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/funded-projects/case-studies/museummaker/>

Design

Northern Ireland Design Alliance provides some useful resources that relate to commissioning and working with designers <http://www.nidesignalliance.com/>

Digital Media

Digital Circle is the representative organisation for digital content businesses in Northern Ireland. Businesses they cover include: web and mobile content, film and television, digital animation, e-learning, games, and music. Its website contains listings of businesses in these areas

<http://www.digitalcircle.org/>

Publishing

Publishing Northern Ireland is an organisation dedicated to raising the profile of Northern Irish writing and publishing. Its website contains a useful list and links to a range of associated arts organisations <http://www.publishingni.org/>

Performing arts

Classical Arts Northern Ireland is a collaborative project coordinated by Audiences NI, to promote classical arts performances, including opera, music and dance. A list of touring companies, theatre groups and associated bodies can be found on its website

<http://classicalartsni.com/>

Music

Over 3000 people work in the music industry in Northern Ireland but, and the sector is particularly strong in terms of performers and composers. For the music industry strategy for Northern Ireland, see http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/northern_ireland_music_industry_strategy.pdf

Film, TV and Radio

Filming can vary widely in scale: while a major feature film may require hundreds of people, with dozens of support vehicles, local television news is often made by one person operating their own camera. While most smaller museums will be unable to support very large-scale filming, many could manage smaller shoots. Most filming opportunities fall into one of two categories: location shoots for period drama, or documentaries which relate closely to the subject of your museum.

Documentaries tend to have small crews and are likely to want to film your museum as a museum, so fewer special arrangements are required. Documentary-makers may wish to

interview staff with special expertise or to film objects out of cases. Explain any conservation requirements directly and simply (see Guidance Sheet 4 for drawing up a written agreement). You will have to be prepared to respond promptly and flexibly to requests for 'recce' visits.

Filming for dramas is likely to be much more disruptive, involving larger film crews and more complex negotiations over the use of rooms, as the film makers are likely to want your museum not to look like a museum. This level of complexity should be reflected in the fee charged. If you feel that you need specialist conservation advice to ensure the safety of buildings and collections during filming, you should factor this in to your location fee. For more on fee levels see Guidance Sheet 4. You will have to respond promptly to requests for 'recce' visits and expect several visits ahead of filming.

Ask for a script or synopsis and be clear if there are going to be any special effects such as smoke, gunfire or fake snow. Ask for a method statement and risk assessment. At this stage, it is your responsibility to flag up hazards such as weak floorboards. You will need to take precautions to protect surfaces and furniture, and specify what film-makers can and cannot do in a written agreement (see Guidance Sheet 4). However, a survey in 2008 showed that less than 10% of all film productions resulted in any damage, and that this was mostly damage to driveways and grass verges from large vehicles.

Whatever filming you agree to, be sure to maximise the publicity it offers. Think about whether you want your contract to allow for local publicity (local newspaper coverage of the shoot itself), a credit on the film or programme itself, or permission to publicise the fact that you have been used as a film location on your website and marketing materials.

Northern Ireland Screen is the lead agency in Northern Ireland for the film, television and digital content industry. It provides information ranging from locations for filming to crews and production companies <http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/>

There are more contacts and resources in Guidance Sheet 4.

