
CULTURE, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING: GREAT MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES FOR EVERYONE

**A COMPANION DOCUMENT
TO ACHIEVING GREAT ART
FOR EVERYONE**

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FOREWORD

DAME LIZ FORGAN, Chair, Arts Council England

In spring 2011 Arts Council England asked Baroness Morris to provide an [independent view](#) on its strategic framework, [Achieving great art for everyone](#). Specifically, we asked her how the Arts Council could adjust its vision for the arts in the next 10 years to embrace the museums and libraries sectors and serve its new wider sphere of influence.

We had accepted our new responsibilities with delight but also with caution. We were conscious of the limited role we could play in the development of both libraries and museums, under current funding constraints. We were determined that all the work we had done setting clear new directions for the arts should not be prejudiced by other calls on our energy and attention. But we were also determined to do everything possible to support these important institutions, their proud histories and unique collections, and to make the most of the opportunities presented by the wider cultural remit coming our way. We were therefore reassured by the enthusiasm with which Estelle approached her review, and excited by the opportunities she saw.

In particular, we are grateful to Baroness Morris for so clearly identifying both the essential differences between museums, libraries and the arts, and also the many things they share. Distinctive skills, disciplines and purposes must be understood and respected but the potential for these three great strands of our culture drawing closer together is rich in opportunity for artists, scholars, audiences and visitors of all kinds. The alchemy is in the connection between the past, the present and the future; between creative and interpretative skills; between reading, seeing, hearing and thinking; between different aspects of the cultural life of the nation and its citizens.

But the key test of this vision can only be whether the public has access to better museums, libraries and arts experiences as a result. As I argued in my foreword to [Achieving great art for everyone](#), excellence must be our guiding star. For museums and libraries, as with the arts, we will unashamedly focus our support on the most excellent; we will seek out originality and innovation, curatorial and scholarly endeavour, inspiring interpretation and real engagement with people and communities.

In the current fiscal squeeze, it is perhaps no surprise that people sometimes question the role of public funding in culture, seeing it as an 'add-on' or 'nice to have' in straightened times. I would fiercely argue the counter: that the arts and culture are absolutely central to the life of the nation, and that every individual should have the right to experience their richness as part of their life experience, personal development and wellbeing. I would go further, and say that at times of difficulty, they are even more important, but that this is why public funders must be stringent in demanding excellence.

This is the challenge handed to the Arts Council as we take up a broader cultural baton: to support and encourage our cultural institutions to provide the public with simply the best possible. Within this shared purpose, I believe that arts organisations, museums and libraries are well placed to claim their rightful place as an essential part of civil society.

A SHARED VISION

ALAN DAVEY, Chief Executive, Arts Council England

Arts Council England has, over many years, developed many areas of expertise: distributing Treasury and Lottery funding to enable the artistic life of the nation to flourish; developing the arts and the public appetite for all that they can offer; and taking a central role in cultural leadership and advocacy. I think we are at the heart of what this country is about – curiosity, challenge, creativity, free expression, an appreciation of beauty and a capacity for wonder, ensuring the arts are there and can help people understand the world they live in and approach.

In December 2010, when the Secretary of State for Culture asked us to take on the museums and libraries responsibilities that the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) had fulfilled, we accepted with excitement, tinged with nervousness, recognising the many opportunities if we get it right.

The arts have in many ways changed and shaped my life, but when I think about it, so have museums and libraries. I remember well the local library where I grew up and the thrill of having your own tickets and being allowed to choose your own books: the transition to the adult library and the place where I found the space to read and study: the place where I found a Greek/English text of *The Odyssey*, adored the story in English and vowed one day to read ancient Greek. I also remember the local museum with its reconstructed period street and strange household objects from beyond my grandparents time; it made the history of where I came from live.

So actually, my life has been shaped by the whole spectrum of arts, museums and libraries – what in bureaucratic terms we can say is a ‘single cultural offer’. It makes sense – and it will make sense as we represent these sectors together going forwards.

Since we were asked to take on these new responsibilities we’ve been working hard to integrate them and this autumn a new cohort of expert staff is joining us as we begin to take up the reins from the MLA. As part of the process we have been listening carefully – to people working in museums and libraries, as well as in the arts – so that we can begin to understand their particular needs and priorities and articulate what our new broader role will mean.

We had a strong context within which to approach the exercise, having recently completed a major strategic review in partnership with the arts sector. *Achieving great art for everyone*, published in November 2010, provides a framework of ambition for the Arts Council, setting out the fields in which we want public subsidy to ensure that first of all excellent art happens, and that people can experience it.

So the challenge became: was the framework robust enough to accommodate our new, wider responsibilities and to guide the work we would do with museums and libraries? Where did it need adjusting? We asked Baroness Morris to give us an external view of this and her [report](#) was published in the summer. Meanwhile, we carried on talking and listening.

This companion document to our strategic framework represents the culmination of these initial conversations. It is meant to be read alongside the original, but also to stand alone. It focuses on museums and libraries, and how the long-term goals we established to guide our investment in the arts will be modified to guide our work with museums and libraries. In particular, it clarifies the framework for the decisions we will make for the remainder of this spending period. It also starts to explore some of the benefits and opportunities for museums and libraries and the arts in being able to work across a wider cultural footprint.

Unlike *Achieving great art for everyone*, which was built on two years of consultation, this document is not a final statement. While we can provide relative clarity about our directions in the short-term, we recognise we have a lot to do to get the best out of an alliance between the arts, museums and libraries in the long-term. So we hope that what is set down here is viewed more as an initial marker, a shared starting point that will prompt longer, deeper conversations over the coming year to inform how we position a single vision for the arts and culture into the next spending period. In future, we do not expect to publish separate frameworks for the arts and for museums and libraries, but before we can bring them together, we must do the proper groundwork.

Alongside this document, we are publishing a number of pieces of work that have informed it, notably a [review of evidence](#) that we undertook both to familiarise ourselves with the landscape and to inform our research work in future. We hope that, in combination, they convey the opportunities we can glimpse, and the excitement we feel about a single vision placing the arts, museums and libraries at the heart of civic life and serving the public in a simpler, more connected and powerful way.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arts Council England is the lead body charged with developing the arts in England. In October 2011, we will add museums and libraries to our responsibilities. As with the arts, this will see us championing, developing and investing in museums and libraries so that people's lives can be shaped and enriched by artistic and cultural experiences and knowledge.

A 10-year strategic framework

In November 2010, the Arts Council published *Achieving great art for everyone*, a strategic framework for our work over the next 10 years that will encourage shared purpose and partnerships across the arts. This companion document is our first attempt to integrate museums and libraries into this framework. It is designed to provide certainty as to the programmes the Arts Council will run from 2011–15 while soliciting further debate about the directions we should take in the longer term.

Long-term goals

At the heart of the framework are five [10-year goals](#), the substance of which have been adapted to reflect the needs and priorities for museums and libraries and sit alongside our existing goals for the arts:

- Goal 1: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in museums and libraries
- Goal 2: More people experience and are inspired by museums and libraries
- Goal 3: Museums and libraries are sustainable, resilient and innovative

- Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in museums and libraries are diverse and highly skilled.
- Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of museums and libraries.

This section sets out why the Arts Council believes each goal is an important area of work and what we will do to deliver it.

Our role and plans 2011–15

This section describes how the Arts Council sees its role in museums and libraries in the short-term, and the ways in which we will champion, develop and invest in these sectors. It provides details of the programmes the Arts Council will run from 2011–15 including the Future Libraries programme, Renaissance in the Regions, the standards and cultural property functions that will transfer and the projects that the MLA had put in place in celebration of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Working together for change

In the long-term, we expect that Arts Council England will not have separate strategies for museums, libraries and the arts. We will use the same framework to drive all of our programmes and inform all of our funding decisions. We will evaluate our success using common goals for museums, libraries and the arts, and will establish a robust evidence base that can inform our policy-making and demonstrate public value in what we fund.

In the short-term, however, we believe that we must first reflect on the diversity of our extended remit to understand fully the specific challenges and opportunities facing museums and libraries. We welcome your responses to this document, which we hope represents a shared starting point for our future work together.

TODAY AND LOOKING FORWARD

The landscape

England's museum sector has grown organically over the last two hundred years and currently numbers some 1,600 individual organisations. It is extraordinarily diverse, with no one typical museum or museum type. A great strength of the sector is this diversity, and the range of funding, governance, collections, staff and interpretation methods within it. Some museums have seen spectacular improvements in the last 15 years. A number of factors have resulted in buildings being revitalised, extended and rebuilt, learning and education programmes growing in quality and stature, and innovative public programmes inspiring more people. A new optimism, entrepreneurial spirit and leadership have emerged among museum staff. A wealth of statistics, some of which we explore in the accompanying [evidence review](#), show how this transformation has had a major impact on audiences.

England's library sector is similarly diverse, comprising thousands of public, academic, further education and school libraries, as well as private and specialist libraries. Together, this country-wide infrastructure offers cultural content, information and knowledge to users locally, nationally and globally. Although public libraries have seen a decrease in the numbers of people borrowing books, evidence shows that where there has been strategic investment – such as in promoting children's reading – visits rise. And patterns of use

are changing, with a significant increase in users accessing services digitally. Libraries have innovated in response, offering enhanced digital provision and actively promoting libraries as local social spaces which can draw in and support new users. Unlike museums or the arts, differences in people's socio-economic status do not affect their likelihood of using a library; neither does illness or having a disability.

The financial pressures facing public, school and academic libraries in the last two years has driven communities to acknowledge their importance and value, often in dramatic ways.

Indeed, it is a challenging climate: changes in museums and libraries themselves and in the way their users are living their lives would be sufficient reason for continued development. Changes in society bring further pressing challenges, with the economic downturn continuing to catalyse a far-reaching reform of public services. Even for those not at the forefront of new and different approaches to delivery in local authorities, it is clear that the pace of change requires ever greater resilience and adaptability from individual services and a more emphatic and collective demonstration of public value.

Achieving excellence

Excellence underpins *Achieving great art for everyone*. Our conversations with the museums and libraries sectors have shown that excellence is, of course, equally important to them. The excellence of their collections and the scholarship that goes with them is the springboard from which other things come.

Excellence is not easy to achieve. Economic pressures require an ever more effective and determined use of investment to care for, update and redisplay collections and to continue to promote the research and scholarship that sits at the heart of many museums and libraries. Economic pressures equally require a commitment to innovation and service development, which in turn demands a better understanding of public interests and needs. Communities increasingly want to be able to access knowledge, information and collections online as well as on-site; they want to participate in the interpretation of collections; they want to discuss and debate the issues raised and share their views with others. Many of the challenges these trends present are

shared across the arts, but some are very specific to museums and libraries as they navigate their way between traditional and emerging practices. For example, the success of the negotiations between libraries and publishers to provide public access to e-books is critical to the ongoing innovation of the library service; so too is the live debate in museums about the way they preserve, record, develop and provide access to their collections – particularly those not on display.

Connecting with people

One measure of excellence in museums and libraries is in the degree of their engagement with people, which is critically dependent on the quality of the experiences they offer and the depth and authenticity of those experiences. Many have a long track record in this respect and have done much to engage diverse audiences. The role libraries play as information and learning resources to help create empowered and informed citizens and promote equality of opportunity is evident in the breadth of their audience. There is a big opportunity for libraries to lead the way in increasing engagement across the cultural sectors.

Whilst there is much to celebrate, there are no grounds for complacency. Museums and libraries share with the arts the need to continue to broaden access, and many common challenges exist. Demographic changes, a growing and ageing population, different consumption tastes and patterns accelerated by new technology, and the changing needs of users, are all creating new demands and pressures.

The Arts Council is keen to see museums and libraries continuing to innovate in their approaches to engaging with communities and making more effective use of volunteers; we are keen to see them working together to achieve this. We see real opportunities to achieve economies of scale and greater impact where museums and libraries are innovating in digital media to promote their programmes, or sharing their assets in collaboration with one another and with external partners. We also see opportunities for the sectors to share their data and knowledge about users and non-users and to promote each others' work more effectively to support people who want to learn. Finally, we see great advantage and opportunity in the arts being able to learn from the very important role that museums and libraries play in promoting lifelong learning, particularly for older people.

Future resilience and sustainability

The issues outlined in *Achieving great art for everyone* are as applicable to museums and libraries as they are to the arts; bluntly, economic downturn is a reality for everyone. But a key difference between them is that a large part of the museums and libraries sector is more vulnerable to the changes occurring at a local level, with budgets reducing and local authorities looking for new delivery models. Some local authorities are considering outsourcing, merging or handing over services to others; some are reducing investment and introducing shorter hours or staff reductions; a few are closing museums and libraries. Independent university and volunteer-run museums and libraries are equally under pressure as government and private investment is reduced and as people have less money to spend on leisure activities.

In this context, the Arts Council's commitment to quality is as valid for museums and libraries as it is for the arts, since this is what will shore up their long-term public value. So too is its ambition to strengthen a mixed economy for culture. Museums and libraries similarly need to strengthen their business models, diversify their income streams and look at new ways of encouraging private giving and supporting enterprise. Likewise, they need to continue to explore new ways of collaborating and improving efficiency in order to thrive not just survive. For the Arts Council, the imperative to enhance our role as an investor that understands how to support and position arts and culture becomes even greater. We will have responsibility for, but relatively few funds to invest in, museums and libraries. Those funds we have will have to work hard, as catalysts for change, alongside the core funding provided by others, such as local authorities, with whom we will work even more closely.

There are other specific challenges for museums and libraries. The digital agenda is a challenge and opportunity across the arts, museums and libraries, but the co-existence of digital and print-based forms presents a special challenge for libraries, with users wanting to access books and information in different ways. The environmental

concerns that museums and libraries share with the arts take on added significance in organisations that have to plan for a long-term sustainable approach to the care of collections. And the economic threat to the smaller museums and libraries, particularly in rural areas, will need our particular attention; although, here, the joining up of cultural and arts provision within the Arts Council may offer shared learning and opportunities that could benefit everyone.

Changing lives and communities

The role museums and libraries play in relation to a broader range of public outcomes (health, education, return to work) is likely to take on a new importance in a context of widespread public reform, as well as strengthening the case we can make for the importance of cultural services to civic life. It will be very valuable for the arts to draw on the partnering skills that museums and libraries have developed and their experience of innovating in the face of change. It is this context of change that requires a new emphasis on dynamic sector leaders and a willingness to embed responsiveness into governance, delivery and management structures. Whilst the Arts Council is committed to promoting the specialist expertise that sits at the heart of museums and libraries, we recognise that we must also support these sectors to embrace new skills and knowledge and greater capacity to adapt to change.

A further challenge for museums and libraries will be to ensure that their workforces are more reflective of the communities they serve. Whilst these sectors have concentrated to great effect in broadening audiences, the diversity of the workforce remains a challenge. Pockets of best practice have the potential to show the way; we will be seeking to identify and promote these examples as we tackle the shared challenges of pushing for equality of access to the training, work and career opportunities that our funding supports.

The next creative generation

Achieving great art for everyone makes the case that young people are leading the way in engaging with new technology, equipping them to make and debate their own arts, break boundaries between art forms and pioneer new sources of knowledge. This is familiar territory for museums and libraries, many of which have been active early adopters of technology as a means of engaging and delivering services to young people. There is still more work to do to help young audiences use these resources to support their own learning and development. For example, many museums use websites to provide access to a wide range of information, but few have yet moved onto creating deeper and more innovative opportunities for digital engagement at a personal and creative level. In this, museums and libraries face similar challenges to the arts with regards to their young audiences.

In other respects, museums and libraries can clearly lead the way. In recent years, libraries have successfully invested in work with the youngest of audiences, knowing that being able to read at an early age critically enhances later success in life. Libraries and museums play an essential role in supporting learning, both in and outside the classroom. Beyond supporting school-based learning, they also provide safe and inspiring spaces for many young people – places in which to meet friends or start to explore their own creative and intellectual interests and gain a broader understanding of their own world and that of other people. We know that they are well used and highly valued, providing young people with access to stimulating experiences, collections, books, information, music, films, activities and the internet. They help with the transition to adult life, too – providing access to information and advice and support for lifelong learning.

Focusing our efforts behind long-term change

As the Arts Council publishes this document, it has yet to take on its new responsibilities. Even when this happens, in October 2011, we recognise how much we will still have to learn. And as with the arts, we are clear that all of the Arts Council's aspirations depend on collaboration with funded organisations. But we also feel that it is important that we can articulate a clear understanding of the unique role we will play, the strategic vision behind our work and some clear goals and priorities.

LONG-TERM VISION AND GOALS

Arts Council England is the lead body charged with developing the arts in England. As of 1 October 2011, it adds the following responsibilities to its remit:

- libraries development and improvement
- Renaissance in the Regions funding programme for regional museums
- museums development and improvement, including a number of programmes intended to support and develop the standards of museums across the UK (Accreditation, Designation and the provision of national security advice)
- a number of statutory cultural property functions that MLA carried out on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Acceptance in Lieu, Export Licensing and the administration of the Government Indemnity Scheme)
- a number of MLA-initiated 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games programmes.

In reviewing these changes to our remit, we have considered the changes needed to our mission, vision and goals.

Mission

Our mission is great art for everyone.

Our expanding remit will see us championing, developing and investing in museums and libraries, so that people's lives can be shaped and enriched by artistic and cultural experiences and knowledge.

Vision

Our vision is of England as a world-leading creative and cultural nation. In 2021 the arts and cultural landscape is thriving, with museums and libraries playing an active and central role. Our organisations are internationally renowned for their excellence and leadership – diverse new work and knowledge is being created, disseminated and enjoyed; collections are being conserved, sustainably managed, displayed, interpreted, discussed and shared; cultural and artistic forms are evolving and there are more opportunities for cross-fertilising and sharing ideas and practice; artists, scholars, staff and the public can develop their creative talent and knowledge; growing audiences are engaging with and helping to shape the arts and culture in new and inspiring ways.

Arts organisations, museums and libraries are at the heart of society, valued and used by local communities across the country. Libraries' role in providing access to and interpretation of high quality information as well as literature and other art forms is recognised. Arts organisations, museums and libraries are the bedrock of the creative, local and tourist economies, contributing to the nation's prosperity, its sense of identity and its international reputation.

Large and small arts organisations, museums and libraries make up a strong ecology that achieves more impact through greater collaboration and innovation.

Arts Council England contributes to a resilient mixed economy supporting arts organisations, museums and libraries, which also draw support from a wide range of public and private funding sources. Artists and organisations have responded with commitment and brilliance to the challenges of the decade, including environmental and technological change.

Above all, there is a sense that outstanding arts and cultural experiences belong to and are available to everyone. They are unmissable; they offer unique experiences, insights and opportunities. Whatever your age or circumstances, there are ways to participate, to find out more and to get involved.

Long-term goals

We plan to focus our activity, working with and alongside many partners, to achieve a small number of long-term goals. We have adapted the substance of the goals to reflect the needs and priorities of museums and libraries and to sit alongside our existing goals for the arts. They will guide our work with these two new sectors.

Goal 1

Excellence is thriving and celebrated in museums and libraries

Why this goal?

Feedback from our conversations suggests that for museums and libraries, as much as for the arts, it is the quality, range and relevance of the offer, and the imaginative programmes that involve and engage people with it that is the foundation of their ongoing success. Some of our museums and libraries are recognised as being among the finest in the world and we want all our museums and libraries to take their place with the finest. But as with the arts, excellence does not just happen; it requires a steadfast commitment, particularly at times of economic hardship. Without this commitment, the achievements of museums and libraries would diminish and audiences would suffer.

What will we do?

We will focus our investment on those excellent and forward thinking museums and libraries best able to drive innovation, care for their collections and share learning. We will support those looking to expand their horizons, whether through ambitious programming, new ways of engaging people or international partnerships that bring new collections and insights to communities.

We will work with partners to champion and support the sustainable development of the collections and scholarship that sit at the heart of our most excellent museums and libraries. We will promote research and curatorship and the role played by many different kinds of experts in bringing collections and knowledge to life.

We will support those museums and libraries at the forefront of embracing diversity through co-production with users, giving priority to those who are developing their offer in consultation and partnership with the people using their services.

We will build on good practice in supporting and enhancing excellent standards in museums and libraries. We will look to learn from this best practice to explore benefits for the arts as we review and develop our own standards programmes.

Lastly, we will support purposeful partnerships across the arts, museums and libraries to drive up the excellence of all. We will invest in those artists, organisations and collaborations exploring the boundaries between different cultural forms or between art and science or art and technology and the ways in which different intellectual starting points can illuminate different perspectives and create new audiences for the benefit of all.

Goal 2

More people experience and are inspired by museums and libraries

Why this goal?

Museums and libraries enrich people's lives. They play a critical role in creating empowered and informed citizens and they hold an incalculable importance within places and communities, promoting understanding and cohesion and inspiring pride. Everyone should have the right to benefit from the collections and knowledge that public funding supports within museums and libraries.

What will we do?

We will build on the role that museums and libraries play at the heart of communities, inspiring civic pride, a sense of place and making a valuable contribution to local economies by driving visits and tourism.

We will support museums' and libraries' work with communities, learning from their work with the public as active partners and creators. We will consider how the arts might benefit from the culture of volunteering that sustains many museums' and libraries' links with their local audiences.

We will place museums and libraries at the heart of our work with the people and places of least cultural engagement, looking to learn from the success of libraries in attracting people that the arts find it hard to reach and encouraging cross-cultural partnerships.

We will develop our touring and digital work to encompass museums and libraries and encourage a greater sharing of collections and assets, extend reach and generate richer experiences for audiences.

We will embrace the lifelong learning work that museums and libraries have led the way on, building this into our broader work with the arts. We will champion the importance of creative experiences to people's wellbeing and development and the role access to knowledge and information plays in supporting and inspiring these.

Goal 3

Museums and libraries are sustainable, resilient and innovative

Why this goal?

Public investment in museums and libraries is reducing and there are many changes happening in the communities they serve. The future growth and success of museums and libraries depends on them adapting to these changes. It depends on the Arts Council working in partnership with co-funders to make the case for proper future investment.

What will we do?

We will strengthen our relationships with the co-funders who are so critical to museums and libraries, especially local government, the heritage sector, higher education and private benefactors.

We will support, encourage and promote those museums and libraries that are the most innovative and enterprising, building strong business-like models from which others can learn. We will champion a debate with others about the future of museum and library services.

We will work with partners, including government, to encourage and enable a higher level of private giving to the arts and culture, advancing our work around philanthropy to embrace our wider role. We will encourage those museums and libraries built on the philanthropic donations of an earlier age to continue these proud histories, emphasising the important role of local people and communities as champions, advocates and fundraisers.

At a time of funding reduction the duty to make maximum use of physical and human resources – buildings and expertise – is pressing. We will encourage networking, collaboration and partnership across museums, libraries and the arts, to stimulate local innovation, share learning and capture efficiencies.

Goal 4

The leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled

Why this goal?

Unless the museums and libraries workforce is diverse and highly skilled, it will not reach its potential. To make an enduring contribution to civic life, museums and libraries must be staffed by people who both reflect and can inspire the communities that they serve. Diversity in the workforce is important to museums and libraries building diverse collections and developing new perspectives. And the ongoing development of an ever-wider range of skills is essential to enabling these sectors to adapt to change.

What will we do?

We will act as a steadfast champion of diversity across the arts, museums and libraries, focusing in particular on creating equal opportunities to enter these workforces.

We will encourage skills development, collaborative working and knowledge sharing, seeking to ensure that mainstream funding responds to the training needs of museums and libraries. In this, we will encourage museums and libraries to embrace a wide range of skills while recognising and refreshing the expertise that has traditionally sustained them.

We will renew our commitment to leadership development, exploring what constitutes excellent, honest, courageous and adaptive leadership across our wider remit.

We will learn from museums' and libraries' work with communities, particularly those museums and libraries that are embedding these skills in new, more responsive and diverse governance and delivery models.

We will build cultural advocacy skills across the arts, museums and libraries, so that the people working in them can become more confident collectively in winning support for the contribution that the arts and culture sectors can make to society.

Goal 5

Every child and young person has opportunity to experience the richness of museums and libraries

Why this goal?

Museums and libraries contribute to the development and well-being of children and young people. They provide learning resources and experiences that can fuel children's curiosity and critical capacity, as well as helping them to challenge and understand their place in the world. Access to the knowledge, experiences and treasures within our museums and libraries is every child's birthright. This is essential to inspiring future audiences and the next creative generation.

What will we do?

We will initiate a debate about what constitutes excellent arts and cultural provision for children and young people by building a shared quality framework that draws on models like Inspiring Learning for All.

We will argue for a coherent and targeted approach to high quality arts and cultural provision for young people, working with national and local government, funded arts and cultural organisations, museums, libraries and other partners, schools and higher and further education institutions.

We will ask the newly established group of Bridge organisations within our national portfolio of funded organisations to pioneer new relationships between education, the arts, museums and libraries.

We will use Renaissance and our investment in partners to build on the world-leading practice in museums and libraries, looking to share learning across the arts about those brilliant programmes that have been inspired by, and produced for, with and by children and young people.

We will adapt our children and young people's programmes Artsmark and Arts Award to promote this best practice.

OUR ROLE IN THE MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES SECTORS 2011–15

The purpose of the Arts Council's strategic framework is to set out what we want to achieve over the long-term. However, we will continue to set out the operational detail of what we do according to the funding cycle set by central government. The next Arts Council Plan will be published in autumn 2011 and will cover the period 2011–15.

When we published *Achieving great art for everyone*, which was built on extensive consultation, we were sure both of our long-term strategy and our short-term priorities. This companion document is different in that we want discussion to continue to stimulate our long-term thinking but at the same time we want to provide certainty as to our short-term priorities. These next two sections therefore describe our policy in some detail for the period 2011–15, throughout which we will continue to integrate museums and libraries more fully into our work in time to make the case for the next spending period (2015–18).

Our role

A partnership approach is fundamental to the successful delivery of our strategy: serious engagement with long-term ambition requires shared purpose and joint effort. This is particularly the case for the Arts Council in the museum and library sectors as we will have more limited funds to invest. We have therefore thought very carefully about how we can work most effectively across our three roles of championing, developing and investing to achieve the most impact. With libraries, for example, our immediate focus will be on public libraries but the wider library sector will feature in our thinking as we develop an approach to supporting the whole library sector.

Championing museums and libraries

We will focus our museums advocacy work on the regional museums that benefit from the Renaissance funding programme, working with partners such as the Association of Independent Museums, the Museums Association and the National Museums' Directors Conference to build a compelling excellence agenda for regional museums to which all museums can contribute. We will look to build partnerships, good practice and evidence to help us make the case for the continuation of the Renaissance programme into the period 2015–18.

Similarly, with libraries, we will focus our advocacy work on public libraries. We will work with partners such as the Local Government Group, the Society of Chief Librarians and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals to develop clear messages about the public value libraries can provide and a shared vision for the library service in 10 years' time. We will build our knowledge and skills to argue for libraries' contribution to outcomes across government into the period 2015–18 as part of our wider voice for culture.

Developing museums and libraries

Our development work tends to be focused on the most pressing issues we identify within the goals. Our first task in relation to museums and libraries will therefore be to continue to gather intelligence and capitalise on the incoming expertise of museums and libraries staff to improve our picture of current and future challenges and opportunities. We will also act in response to feedback that we need to move quickly with regard to the following issues.

For regional museums, we will focus on developing resilience and empowering leadership. We will work hard to strengthen networks within the sector, both by positioning the various funding streams and programmes we will be running within a coherent and connected framework, and by looking to build relationships, for example between national and regional museums. We will also lay the foundations for a strong infrastructure for learning and knowledge transfer.

Our development work for libraries will focus on promoting excellence, strengthening the reading, information and learning role of libraries; developing new ways for people to access the cultural knowledge and experiences that libraries offer and identifying innovative and effective ways of responding to the challenges which the sector will face in the years ahead. Again, we will work in partnership to achieve this, as well as using our wider remit to encourage better long-term local partnerships between libraries, museums and the arts.

Investing in museums and libraries

As with the arts, we will use the five goals as a framework for our funding decisions and to establish clear relationships with those we fund. For museums, we will use Renaissance to drive development and deliver excellence in England's regional museums, focusing in particular on strengthening the foundations of excellence, resilience and leadership in 2012–15. For libraries, we will focus our resources on research and supporting innovation and leadership; the Future Libraries programme will be a key tool in delivering improvements.

OUR PLANS 2011–15

The year 2011/12 is a transitional year, with most staff and programmes being transferred from MLA to the Arts Council in October 2011. We have been working closely with the MLA since the beginning of 2011 to ensure the smooth transition of those programmes that will transfer without any change in scope (the standards programmes, the cultural property functions and the plans MLA had put in place in celebration of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games). At the same time, we have been focusing on the implementation of new approaches to Renaissance and the library development and improvement agenda – and we will start to implement these plans from the date of publishing this document.

Our plans for Renaissance and museum development

Renaissance in the Regions was launched in 2002 to bring about tangible change in the ambition and quality of regional museums across the country. An independent review of the programme was published in July 2009, following which the MLA put forward a vision for the next stage. The Arts Council's brief was to carry these plans forward in the most appropriate way, with a budget of £43m per annum for 2012–15. The Arts Council will look to build on the achievements of the programme so far, using the five goals set out in this document, to drive development and encourage excellence in regional museums.

For 2012–15, the four strands of Renaissance will be:

- a programme of major grants
- a strategic support fund
- a body of national programmes
- a final strand that underpins the Arts Council's commitment to museum development.

The national programmes are among those responsibilities transferring on 1 October 2011, and will continue as before. They support the museum infrastructure and include the Accreditation and Designation programmes and the provision of national security advice. In addition, Arts Council England will maintain the commitment to the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and PRISM. Many of these programmes are UK-wide, offering benefit to the countries outside England, and some support other sectors, such as archives.

We will take a new approach to the other three strands, starting with the launch of a major grant programme. This will begin with an open application process, similar to the Arts Council's National Portfolio programme. It will look for a group of regional museums with the appetite and capacity to play a wider leadership role in developing excellence across the museum sector. The application process will open in September 2011 and conclude early in 2012.

The Arts Council will develop a complementary funding stream similar to the MLA's plans for a challenge fund. This will take effect later in 2012 and will target those development gaps within the Arts Council's five goals that are not addressed by the recipients of major grants.

Finally, a strong commitment to museum development will be maintained, with £3m investment; Arts Council England will see through the plans the MLA had been developing to strengthen the infrastructure in this important area.

Our plans for libraries

Our first action will be to develop the Future Libraries programme. Building on the partnership approach that has characterised the programme so far, the Arts Council will run a two-stage approach, over 18 months, from autumn 2011 to the end of March 2013, with the first stage delivered in partnership with the Local Government Group (LGG). This will focus on the immediate challenges faced by libraries in the current climate, and the LGG will identify a number of authorities for the Arts Council to support in implementing the ideas and best practice that came out of the original programme. The learning will be developed into expert guidance, which can be played into the second stage, which will focus on long-term goals, strengthening the sector and encouraging partnerships and innovation at a local level.

Our plans to integrate museums, libraries and the arts

At the same time as rolling out these dedicated museum and library funding programmes and services, we will look to all of our programmes and investments to consider where an integrated approach would work best for all. Focusing in particular on our participation and children and young people work, we will pilot programmes that look to encourage collaboration between museums, libraries and arts organisations, exploring the opportunities that can be grasped through an integrated approach. We hope that children and young people could particularly benefit from this, but also that a more joined-up sector could considerably enhance the informal learning offer for people throughout their lives.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

Since the publication of *Achieving great art for everyone*, we have worked hard to develop a performance management framework that we will use to help us evaluate whether we are succeeding in what we set out to do. The funding agreements we have negotiated with our National Portfolio organisations will enable us to gather consistent information and a coherent body of evidence, which will in turn drive our case for investment at the next spending review. Our plan is to integrate museums and libraries into this work.

We will also use the performance management framework to renew our commitment to research over the next 10 years. The [evidence review](#) published alongside this document is our first analysis of the evidence base for museums and libraries, its strengths and shortcomings, and how we need to strengthen the way in which evidence is collected shared and used by museums and libraries. It also identifies some possible areas for future research. As with the [Long-term vision and goals section](#) of this document, we welcome your views on our analysis so far.

HAVE YOUR SAY

We will run an informal consultation, from September 2011 to the end of March 2012, as part of the continual process of getting to know our new stakeholders. During this period, we will:

- engage with the museums and libraries sectors through the programmes we are implementing, specifically Renaissance and the Future Libraries programme
- work with key partners like the Association of Independent Museums, the Museums Association, the National Museums' Directors Conference, the University Museums Group, the Local Government Group, the Society of Chief Librarians and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals to consult with the wider constituencies they represent
- continue to take an active role in meetings and conferences tackling issues relevant to museums and libraries
- encourage an active engagement with stakeholders at a local level, including by running a further programme of regional conversations in spring 2012.

This programme will see us actively soliciting debate about the contents of this document. In addition, we welcome individual responses. What else should we be considering as we plan for the next 10 years? What challenges and opportunities have we underplayed or not yet identified? What are your issues and views?

You can get in touch by emailing:
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Charity registration no 1036733

You can get this publication in Braille, in large print, on audio CD and in electronic formats. Please contact us if you need any of these formats.

ISBN: 978-0-7287-1504-2

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We are committed to being open and accessible. We welcome all comments on our work. You can get in touch by emailing: museums.libraries@artscouncil.org.uk

Acknowledgement: this publication is the result of the generous advice and thoughtful and expert contributions of many people working in museums and libraries.

Written, edited and produced by Arts Council England, with thanks to MLA colleagues.



Awarding funds from

The National Lottery[®]

Design: Blast

www.blast.co.uk