

DCF Opening up Collections

Project summaries 2006-08

East of England

- The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, part of the University of Cambridge, will receive £97,180 to make thousands of photographs, documentary sources and ancient and modern objects relating to the arctic communities of east-Canada available online. The project will gather input from people who live in the Nunavut communities of east-Canada.
- Colchester Museums has been awarded £100,000 to share its archaeological collections with a broader range of local audiences through its 'Museum on Wheels' project. A custom made travelling museum will tour local venues, hosting a range of displays and activities on different themes.
- The Fitzwilliam Museum, part of the University of Cambridge, will be using its grant of £99,984 to find out more about the people behind its collection of paintings, drawings, antiques, armour and coins and use their hidden histories to tell more stories about the objects. Over 5,000 images of these characters and their stories will be available through a virtual online exhibition where viewers can add their own perspectives. A multimedia hand-held e-guide and tailor-made tours will be developed for museums visitors.
- The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, also part of the University of Cambridge, will be using its award of £70,301 to display a never before seen collection of rocks that were gathered by Charles Darwin on his famous voyages aboard HMS Beagle (1831-6). The project involves new research on these collections and on Darwin's annotated catalogues.
- The Museum of Zoology, part of the University of Cambridge, will collaborate with the Sedgwick Museum and use its award of £70,971 to produce a new permanent exhibition which will display for the first time material collected by Darwin on his HMS Beagle Voyages. The specimens will include animals such as finches, barnacle slides and fish. The exhibition will analyse how the items helped Darwin develop his theories of evolution and how they add to our understanding of science today.

East Midlands

- Northampton Museum and Art Gallery has been awarded £95,000 to record the stories of former workers from Northampton's famous shoe making industry. Northampton's history of shoe making gained a higher national profile last year, thanks to the British Independent Film Award nominated film Kinky Boots in which a traditional Northamptonshire brogue making factory is introduced to a niche market in boot making by a transvestite cabaret singer. The Northampton Museum and Art Gallery project will continue to enrich the region's heritage by recording the personal experiences of former shoemakers before they are lost forever. The museum will create an archive of its recordings that will be available for public use in addition to sharing the information with other local museums and community organisations.
- The Canal Museum in Stoke Bruerne is one of three museums in the Waterways Trust that will benefit from a grant of £100,000 in a project that will give new life to old boats. The Waterways Trust has eighty historic vessels in its collection that are in need of conservation assessment, research and innovative interpretation. The fascinating histories of these eighty vessels will be researched and the resulting information will be made available in the Canal Museum and the two other National Waterway Museum galleries in Ellesmere Port and Gloucester. The new information will also be digitised and made available online.

London

- The Horniman Museum has been awarded £100,000 to make its vast Chinese collections accessible to the public for the first time. The collection consists of around 4,500 items, including objects from shrines, costumes, jewellery, Buddha images and weapons and the museum will be working with local Chinese community groups to explore and develop new interpretations of the collections. The collection will also be made available on the museum's website.
- The Museum of London will use its grant of £100,000 to create a new website for its internationally important Roman collections. The collections, which are already a central part of the museum's display, tell the story of civilian and military life in Londinium - the largest town in Roman England.
- Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at University College London will be using its award of £94,313 to develop a project called 'Redressing Identities'. The Petrie holds many outstanding archaeological items that were once the personal objects of ancient Egyptians. Many of these items are too fragile to be displayed or handled, but this cash boost will pay for special conservation, allowing them to go on display. An outreach leader will explore the historical significance of dress with Londoners of African descent.
- Sir John Soane's Museum will be spending its award of £99,135 on a project entitled 'A Passion for Building'. Two special exhibitions relating

ordinary people to architecture and building will draw on museum, library and archive material from across London in addition to new research from the Soane Museum. Running firstly in London and then a further three venues across England, the exhibition will be supported by educational events and a DVD.

- London's Transport Museum has been awarded £82,100 to reveal the hidden histories behind its famous collection of posters that have adorned London's buses and tubes for nearly 100 years. For the first time the original artworks for the posters will be researched, conserved and digitised, to make them available to an online audience.

North East

- Tyne and Wear museums service is benefiting from £100,000 from the Designation Challenge Fund to enhance its decorative arts and contemporary crafts collections, which are among some of the most important in the country. The objects in the collections span all ages and places of origin, from Ancient Greek Pottery to recent Japanese metalwork. The public will be asked to help evaluate and interpret the decorative art and the feedback will be used to inform many new displays, including the forthcoming 'Designs for Life' exhibition at Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead, opening in 2007.

North West

- Lancashire County Museum Service has been awarded £98,500 to produce a virtual exhibition celebrating post-war developments within the Lancashire Textile Industry. The project will tell previously untold stories about the more recent past of the industry such as the importance of workforce migration from the Indian subcontinent.
- Manchester City Galleries will be using its grant of £100,000 to appoint a Community Interpretation Officer who will work with community groups to explore the many meanings behind the gallery's fine, decorative art and costume collections. The project will encourage users to see the collections as something that belongs to them and it will produce a series of online resources, displays and events.
- The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester has been awarded £98,940 to bring to life its collections of things used or made by the people of the North West. The 'Histories Revealed' project will collect personal stories behind the items it collected before the 1990s and make these stories available to everyone through online resources and travelling exhibitions.
- The People's History Museum will be spending £89,600 to create a temporary exhibition on the Growth of British Democracy 1800-2000. It will interpret the progress of reform as it affected the lives of the British working people and objects not previously seen by the public will be researched, conserved and exhibited through collaboration with the other museums in Manchester and further afield.
- Whitworth Art Gallery, at the University of Manchester, has been awarded £59,000 to explore the textile pattern books assembled at

Thomas Wardle's Printworks in Leeks and offer new insights into the working processes of late nineteenth century designers, retailers and manufacturers. The notes are very important, including records of dye experiments carried out for William Morris. The fragile books themselves will be made available for users online, using innovative book-browsing technology.

- The Wordsworth Trust has been awarded £93,672 to explore the role of women contained in the books, letters, journals and art that forms the Trust's outstanding holdings. 500 letters and 750 paintings will be digitised and made available online with the ability to view interactive information about the writers and hear sound files of the original poems and songs. The new research will contribute to a touring exhibition, talks, workshops and family activities.
- The Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port is one of three museums in the Waterways Trust that will benefit from a grant of £100,000, in a project that will give new life to old boats. Eighty historic vessels in the collection are in need of conservation assessment, research and innovative interpretation. The fascinating histories of these 80 vessels will be researched and the resulting information will be digitised and available online and in the National Waterway Museum's galleries.

South East

- The Museum of the History of Science at the University of Oxford will be awarded £99,904 to reach out beyond the museum's traditional audience to produce an original exhibition on the visual images that can be seen through a microscope. Microscopic visions are common in science collections but difficult to display, this project will explore innovative ways to make this possible and run a programme of educational events.
- The Mary Rose Trust in Portsmouth has been awarded a boost of £95,000. The project will use assistive technology to make the sixteenth century warship, the Mary Rose, more accessible to children with learning difficulties and those with visual impairments. The museum's website will also achieve a disability-friendly recognised standard.
- The Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading will use an award of £99,995 to bring to life the hidden histories behind its rural craft collections by making on location digital film records of the tools and equipment in use. The newly created films will be shared with other museums.
- The National Motor Museum will receive £99,750 to create an innovative touring exhibition 'High Days and Holidays'. The show will present a wide range of materials including photo albums, mementoes and picnic hampers, from the Victorian holidays to 1960's mods and rockers. Material will be interpreted in a dynamic and multi-dimensional storyline, centered on the social history of leisure and the adventure of motoring holidays.

- Brighton and Hove City Council Museums Service will be using its award of £100,000 to develop a project on the theme of courtship and the rules of attraction. Audiences will be invited to apply this theme to its outstanding decorative art, world art and anthropology and natural history collections by considering the role of objects in the processes of wooing and animal courtship, drawing out contemporary relevance and new meanings from the collections.
- The Pitt Rivers Museums at the University of Oxford is receiving an award of £98,571 to present its weapons collections in an innovative way. Arms are often displayed and interpreted from a purely technical perspective. This project called 'Cutting Edge' will encourage audiences to debate the issues surrounding the armour and arms collection drawing on modern cultural references.
- The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Chichester is using its grant of £76,210 to create a film record of its animal-powered agricultural equipment in action with actual livestock. The items currently only exist in static displays. The moving images will also draw on photographic and archive collections from the Museum of English Rural Life to create materials that will be shared with other rural museums.

South West

- Bristol City Council's Museums and Galleries Archives has been awarded £100,000 to open up an underused collection of photographic images that form part of its outstanding local history collections. 3,500 images will be digitised and available freely online. Behind the scenes work on 5,000 photographs will allow the museum to work in partnership with local community groups to add new meanings and associations to the images. A touring display will showcase the images at local venues.
- The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery in Exeter will be using its grant of £100,000 to maintain public access to the 'Outside World Cultures' collections whilst it closes for a major refurbishment. The collections will form two temporary exhibitions at City Museums and Art Gallery in Plymouth and Museum in the Park, Stroud. Both museums will supplement the items with their own ethnographical material and work with local schools and universities to link the display into the curriculum themes of citizenship and identity.
- The National Waterways Museum, Gloucester will benefit from a grant of £100,000 awarded to The Waterways Trust, a project that will give new life to old boats. The 80 historic vessels at the core of its collection are in need of conservation assessment, research and innovative interpretation. The fascinating histories of these 80 vessels will be researched and the resulting information will be digitised and available online and in the National Waterway Museum's galleries.

West Midlands

- Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery has been awarded £130,838 - the largest award made in this year's fund. The project has two strands; the first will be carried out in partnership with Thinktank Trust. Entitled 'We made it', the project will see local communities develop a self-curated exhibition of objects from the museum's Designated Science and Industry collection. It will go on display at Thinktank, Birmingham's Science Museum and there will be traineeship and placement opportunities for local young people. The second strand, Learning to Engage, is a region-wide research programme covering all 6 Designated West Midlands collections, it will explore the meanings that audiences make from objects. The results will be shared with other museums.
- Stoke on Trent Museums Service will receive £99,636 to investigate how it should develop its collections and displays so that they have greater personal relevance to contemporary multicultural audiences. The collections represent the national heritage of major regional industry 'The Potteries', telling the stories of its people, products and landscapes. As the ceramic industry changes, the way the collection engages with its audience needs to change too. A specially commissioned new interpretation of its Islamic ceramics, will be created, as a basis for debate.
- The Wedgwood Museum Trust will be using its award of £100,000 to go digital with a range of e-learning packages that will be available to visitors of the Wedgwood museum, due to open in 2007. The entire collection will be made available online.

Yorkshire

- Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust is receiving £99,991 to challenge perceptions held about Sheffield's metal working industries and unlock modern stories among the Trust's metalworking collections. A film will be created involving metalwork craftspeople currently operating in Sheffield, including the only firm still making hand-forged silver flatware and cutlery.
- Hull Museums Service will be spending its award of £99,750 on improving its Decorative arts collection that at present is scattered across several museums and not all on display. Over 2000 items including silver, furniture, scrimshaws and ceramics will be researched, digitised and catalogued to create an interactive online resource. The new research will inform workshops and 'rediscovered' items will be conserved and displayed.
- Leeds Museums and Galleries is receiving a grant of £98,700 to explore the many stories embedded in the print collections it holds. This research will draw connections between these collections and those of other museums. The project will fully digitise the museum's Fine Art collection and create an online catalogue. A special temporary exhibition focusing on the prints will be created.