

Treasures of the East Midlands: User-needs survey

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1. Executive summary

Commissioned by Renaissance East Midlands, this user needs survey built on consultation work undertaken during 2007-9 with museums and audiences in the East Midlands and wider user research conducted nationally and internationally. For this study, focus groups were held with five 'user modes' identified in 'Virtually There'¹: Family planning a visit, Follow-up family, Adult planning a visit, Follow-up adult and General interest surfers.

In summary, findings were:

- All user groups currently:
 - Search on **Google** and **Wikipedia** for **places, people, themes** of relevance to museums, rather than searching museum collections websites directly
 - Search on Google for museum **visit information** and are not concerned about the source of the information, which could come from a **TIC** etc, rather than from the museum's own website.
 - Search for their own town or the place they want to visit, eg the Peak District. The '**East Midlands**' was not generally understood or used.
- All users say they would use **interactive maps**, if available.
- Families and visitors say they would use **zooming images**, if available.
- Children say they would use **timelines**, if available.
- All user groups would like to see content relating to **social history**, including implications of historical objects to people, how people lived etc.

Much more detail is available in the main report and appendices, together with an analysis of the findings of previous research including 'Virtually There', e-learning and Learn with Museums consultation and data from Ofcom and the Office for National Statistics.

¹ 'Virtually There: Understanding audiences for online collections resources in the East Midlands', Morris Hargreaves McIntyre for Renaissance East Midlands, March 2009

To satisfy the needs of museum visitors, including family groups, and to attract adult web surfers, Renaissance East Midlands and regional museums are recommended to consider the following:

1. Object information should include **place** metadata and **thematic** information to ensure it is picked up in relevant Google searches. Tags must use terms familiar to children and non-specialist audiences.
2. Objects must have a **persistent URL** to ensure visibility to Google etc.
3. Ensure that museum visit information on **TIC sites/Culture24** is **up to date** as visitors may not use the museum's own website for this information
4. Check information relating to museum's key collections/themes on **Wikipedia** and update if necessary. Submit links from existing thematic entries on Wikipedia to museum sites.
5. Reconsider developing a website which includes the '**East Midlands**' in its name. Users – particularly from outside the region - may well be put off by this name.
6. Consider providing audiences with the following website features:
 - a. **interactive maps**
 - b. **zooming images**
 - c. **sound/video/animation**
 - d. opportunity for users to **seek dialogue with staff** – ideally via moderated bulletin boards to which staff reply within a few days.
 - e. opportunity to **share views and content** (eg recommendations and personal stories or participation in specific projects/calls for content)
 - f. Information on **where objects can be seen and key objects at a particular museum**
 - g. Interactive **activities/challenges** for families and pupils
 - h. Recommendations and links to **other websites and museums**
 - i. **Images that can be downloaded** to be used in children's homework (ie non-commercial use)
 - j. Register for **email updates/newsletter**.
7. **Investigate options and costs** (particularly for content creation and graphic design) of creating **timelines**.
8. Object information should be '**layered**' (eg click for more detail) and linked to **thematic/social or cultural** content.

The report recommends conducting a feasibility study to consult with stakeholders and investigate options for delivery in line with users' needs.

2. The brief

Treasures of the East Midlands will:

- *showcase museum collections alongside creative interpretation by our audiences, to tell the story of the East Midlands.*
- *provide a platform for museums to inspire, engage and interact with audiences*
- *be a regional digital project that will bring together collections and audiences through learning and community engagement work.*

The purpose of the user-needs survey is to build on the current research into our audiences. It will help us to ascertain the format and design of the digital outputs.

Outcomes

- *Liaise with partners that will provide content such as regional museums, Media Archive Central England and East Midlands Oral History Archives.*
- *Identify and recommend best practice examples of other cultural digital projects*
- *3 creative consultation session(s) with audience groups, to be identified by museum partners*
- *Interim stage report giving outline key findings*
- *Completed user-needs survey and recommendations on the next steps.*

Note: Work on outcomes 1 and 2 started during the user needs survey, but were completed as part of the feasibility study. It was agreed that the results would be reported there.

3. Analysis of previous research

This study has built on

- consultation work undertaken during 2007-9 with museums and audiences in the East Midlands ('Virtually There', Learn with Museums and e-learning consultation and Find Your Talent's e-communications study) and
- wider user research conducted nationally and internationally.

3.1 Virtually There²

This research programme was conducted by consultants Morris Hargreaves McIntyre for Renaissance East Midlands and completed in March 2009. Researchers analyzed usage statistics from a number of East Midlands museums' collections websites and conducted an online survey of website visitors. The same sites were then shown to potential users in a series of interviews and discussion groups.

By segmenting users into 10 'modes', the consultants looked at people's motivations for using online collections resources and made very useful suggestions for designing new sites aimed at specific audience needs. (See appendix A for more information.)

² 'Virtually There: Understanding audiences for online collections resources in the East Midlands', Morris Hargreaves McIntyre for Renaissance East Midlands, March 2009

3.2 Learn with Museums and e-learning consultation³

*“Learn with Museums should provide a facility where users can **upload their own material** on the website, such as social networking sites and others (Facebook, Bebo and YouTube). For example, local people can add their own stories or photographs to the website.”* (e-learning in schools consultation, ERS for Renaissance East Midlands, 2007)

*“The idea of including **audio and video** downloads was strongly welcomed, although the research highlighted the need to overcome potential security restrictions that stopped teachers from downloading audio and video files.”* (Evaluation of Learn with Museum website, QA Research on behalf of MLA East Midlands, 2008 (p34))

“The results also highlight the need to provide interactive resources teachers can use immediately without having to adapt them hugely.” (Evaluation of Learn with Museum website, QA Research on behalf of MLA East Midlands, 2008 (p7))

“All teachers wanted access to video and audio clips, for example, museum representatives describing objects, images accompanied by sound effects.” (Learn with Museums: summary of teacher research to inform e-learning packages by Sara Mair for Renaissance East Midlands 2008?)

3.3 Other user research conducted nationally

3.3.1 In its report ‘The Communications Market 2008’⁴, **Ofcom** demonstrated widespread public interest in **downloading video and accessing user generated content**:

“Consumers of all ages are showing a growing interest in accessing audio-visual content online; 17% of those with broadband watched TV over the internet, up by eight percentage points on 2006 – and this is particularly apparent among younger people. Responding to this trend, a range of broadcasters have begun to make their content available for download or streaming online, but consumers are just as interested in user-generated content, and many regard it as being as valuable as its professionally-produced counterpart.”

“Twenty-six per cent of those aged 15-24 claim to use the internet for ‘watching TV programmes’ in 2008, up by 16 percentage points in twelve months. Fifty-one per cent used it for ‘watching video clips/webcasts’, also up by 16 percentage points over the same period.” ()

3.3.2 The Office of National Statistics has found that 24% of internet users upload self-created content (text, images, photo, video) and 23% download or watch movies, short films or videos. (Internet Access 2008 First Release⁵)

ONS has also published figures on which demographic groups do not have access to the internet and why. (For this and other research on internet usage, see appendix A.)

3.3.3 National Collections Online feasibility study (Flow Associates, in preparation)

“Seeking information is the primary reason for people to use the web, and there are

³ http://www.renaissanceeastmidlands.org.uk/our_work/learning/elearning.html

⁴ <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/cmr08/>

⁵ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/iahi0808.pdf>

enormous opportunities for cultural collections to feed better into general information resources, to relate their collections to more general or popular topics of enquiry and to optimise their search results in Google.” (Phase 2, p24)

“Advanced searches are difficult. People are so used to Google they want a single box, a free text box, even the professional users want this. People like maps. For 80% of questions, there is a geographical element. They just want to type things in and not refer to several drop-down lists. People are asking for Google-style ranking of results.” (Phase 1, p71)

“...it would seem that people would be most engaged by a set of materials about famous people (celebrities, artists, writers, scientists, politicians, military figures etc), and to explore how these connect with places and themselves.” (Phase 2, p27)

This report also provides a useful summary of user research conducted by London Museums Hub and Culture24 (Part 2, pp16-17) and the findings of Flow’s previous research on “*seeking resources for **educational activity***” (Part 2, pp18-19).

3.3.4 Big Lottery Fund evaluation of NOF-Digitisation projects

“The identification of target users by the majority of projects was not policy-led or particularly consistent with the aim of targeting individuals and communities facing particular barriers to learning. Although ‘the general public’ potentially benefits from the wealth of available digitised content and new websites, very few projects with broad target audiences made much progress in using the content and outcomes to reach and attract users from hard-to-reach population groups or disadvantaged learners.” (Education for Change: The Fund’s ICT Content Programmes: Final Evaluation, Big Lottery Fund, March 2006⁶)

3.3.5 London Museums Hub audience consultation on use of websites, March 2008

The methodology and results of this study were similar to those for Treasures. Focus groups included a group of 18-24 year olds.

4. Methodology

*“Many current sites are aiming to increase access for the public in general – however, it easy for this to result in a site which does not meet the needs of any users, as it is not designed with these users in mind. This research has shown that it is very difficult for an online collections resource to meet the needs of many user modes at the same time: it is a good idea to **prioritise users** so that you are clear who you are catering for.” (‘Virtually There’ p.49)*

For this study, focus groups were held with five ‘user modes’ identified in ‘Virtually There’:

- Family planning a visit
- Follow-up family
- Adult planning a visit
- Follow-up adult and
- General interest surfers.

Renaissance East Midlands also wants Treasures to cater for:

⁶ http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_ict_final_rep.pdf

- Young people/groups through opportunities to generate their own content. (Requirements to be informed by Find Your Talent’s e-communications study - in preparation.)
- Teachers and pupils, through links to ‘Learn with Museums’
- Hobbyists, experts and researchers through links to museums’ own collections catalogues.

Focus groups were held with general interest surfers and families and interviews with museum visitors. The adult web surfers were also asked to complete an online survey prior to the focus group meeting (see appendix D for questions). Methodology followed that recommended in:

- ‘Virtually There’
- ‘Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research’ by Richard A Krueger (1988)
- ‘Evaluation of Digital Cultural Content: Analysis of evaluation material’ by Alice Grant (2003)
- MLA London’s ‘Understanding Audiences’ factsheets: Factsheet 6 – Evaluation tools: Focus groups by Alison James (2007)
- ‘Inspiring Learning for All’ Improvement Toolkit: Focus group guide.

Advice was also provided by consultants Heather Lomas and Nicky Boyd.

All groups were asked the following questions:

- What website(s) do you use as a source of information?
- What museum websites have you used?
- What do you think a website with the name ‘Treasures of the East Midlands’ might contain?
- Tick those topics/themes you might be interested in and write other suggestions on the chart (see appendix B)
- This is what you might be able to do on the new website [slide listing main features]. Showed example websites [Map, Timeline, User comments, Tagging and downloadable gallery tour – see appendix C] and asked what they think.

In the case of the families group, participants were asked to draw/write their answers on flip-charts which were then discussed in the group. Detailed results are in appendix D, E and F and key findings are summarised in section 5.

5. Findings

Key findings from the focus groups/interviews are as follows:

- No-one in any of the three groups had used **museum collections websites**.
 - *“I would go to a museum to look at animals, birds and butterflies. For history, I go to a book or a website – not a museum.”* (Adult web surfer)
 - *“If I want some historical information, I just Google it.”* (Adult web surfer)
- Some families and visitors had used **museum websites** for pre-visit information, but mainly as a result of a Google search. The actual site used to find visit information is not important to visitors and could be a TIC as easily as a museum’s website.
 - *“There was loads of stuff when you type it [Charles Darwin] into Google, but the first one was the Natural History Museum.”* (Boy, 11 – Families group)
 - *“Henry VIII – I did it on Wikipedia and it came up with some of his swords and armour and pictures.”* (Girl, 10 – Families group)

- *"If we're going to go to an area I tend to put in a town [on Google] and it brings up a host of sites – and there's generally a tourist information one."* (Father – Families group)
 - *"We subscribe to [New Zealand museums]e-newsletters & find them useful."*(Visitor)
- The word '**Treasures**' was mostly well liked, with several people saying it implied secrets and adventures and would entice people to investigate. However, some people thought it implied historical objects and places, rather than contemporary issues and people. Some children and some adult web surfers thought it implied things of monetary value.
 - *"The fact that Treasures is plural rather than singular opens your mind - brings a different context. Implies adventures on your own doorstep. Makes you interested."* (Father – Families group)
- '**East Midlands**' was not generally understood. Residents of Leicester and Derby both concentrated on things to be seen in their city and county, while the visitors to Northampton museum (who were visiting from overseas) had a much broader requirement and wanted to see information about East Anglia, Bedfordshire and other bordering counties.
 - *"...is this supposed to be a really good guide to the East Midlands to uncover interesting facts that might appeal to tourists and locals alike ... rather than just a museum website?" "...find things you didn't think you were interested in ... all in one place. What's going on. Things not advertised."* (Adult web surfer)
- Across all groups, there was enthusiasm for Powerhouse Museum's then and now **map** feature⁷.
 - *"People spend a long time looking at old photographs and try to work out where it is in relation to current thing. It really grips people. I think something like that [would work]." "...all the sites around the East Midlands. I'd be interested."* (Adult web surfers)
 - *"Personally, I like that. Very interesting to see what something was like many years ago."* (Father – Families group)
- The families group were very enthusiastic about **zooming images**⁸ and this was also well liked by the visitors group.
 - *"A really brilliant idea"* (Mother– Families group)
- Children in the families group were very enthusiastic about the BBC History **timeline**⁹, but some of the adults in that group and the visitors group were concerned about the limitations of the text content. The visitors preferred the Historyworld¹⁰ format.
 - *"If you were doing a project at school, would go to a certain period in history ... and it's got major events that you could put into your work."* (Girl, 10 – Families group)

⁷ <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/flickr/sv-index.php?page=2> See Appendix C for more information about the websites demonstrated in the focus groups.

⁸ www.nationalgallery.org.uk/collection

⁹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_british.shtml

¹⁰ <http://www.historyworld.net/timelines/existing.asp?gtrack=orig>

- *"I like the idea of having objects on there – that's something a museum could offer. ... Otherwise the kids are just copying out lists."* (Mother – Families group)
 - *"I know of certain things that I would expect to see but they're not there [on the BBC History timeline]."* (Visitors)
- There was very little interest from any group in **commenting** on objects or other people's input or **tagging**. There was some interest in reading visitors' **reviews** of museum exhibitions, but this was tempered by some reports of unreliable reviews in other sectors (eg hotels).
 - *"I'm less sure about that (commenting/tagging). It's important to me that it's factually accurate."* (Adult web surfer)
 - *"I don't like the idea of commenting on someone else's work. Could cause arguments. (Girl, 8 – Families group)*
 - *"I often find these reviews suspect ..."* (Adult web surfer)
 - *"If you're interested in going to something, you have a look at visitors' reviews, not just media reviews. Usually quite useful."* (Adult web surfer)
- No-one had much interest in **social networking** tools. A few adults used Facebook, but one said it was 'swamping'. Some of the older children use MSN or other chat rooms.
 - *"I don't really like the idea of people typing to you because it could get upsetting."* (Girl, 8 – Families group)
 - *"It's just better to talk to somebody. People would say mean things that they wouldn't say to your face."* (Boy, 11 – Families group)
- There was no interest in these groups in using **mobile technology** in galleries.
 - *"would prefer to have something in front of me that you can read and look at rather than listen to somebody speaking to you."* (Girl, 10 – Families group)
 - *"I've got 5 kids – what if they haven't all got the up to date phone? Seven of us walking around the gallery [listening on phones] ...not really interacting, are we?"* (Mother – Families group)
 - *"This [digital info] is all good stuff for finding out what you might see before you go or following up when you come back. When you're there with your family it's nice to have a conversation about what you see and what's gone on. If you want to do more research that's something you do when you get back."* (Father – Families group)
- **Topics/themes** of most interest to the adult web surfers/non visitors and families were mostly related to their local city or county, but there was also a very strong desire across all groups for material relating to social history, including background (eg why was there a Civil War?) and implications of industries to people.
 - *"Museums should be as much about people and their stories than about 'things' and 'yesteryear'. Museums should be more about people's contribution, involvement, heritage. Lots of people focus on the physical thing... and a trick is being lost... Root it more in more recent history, social/cultural history, might start to see a wider or different audience."* (Adult web surfer)
 - *"[I want to] know how people lived."* (Mother - Families group)

The key findings from each group are summarised in table A.

Detailed findings and example quotations from each group are in appendix D, E and F.

Table A: Summary of key findings from the focus groups

(See appendix C for addresses of websites used.)

	Adult web surfers, not museum visitors (Leicester)	Families (Derby)	Visitors (Northampton)
Favourite websites	Google, eBay, sport, specialist clubs	Google, Wikipedia	Specialist clubs, shopping. Fast, simple to use sites.
Museum collections website used?	Only the British Library and British Museum. Thought museum websites were only for visitors.	Not directly. Natural History Museum found via a Google search for Darwin. Derby Museum & Art Gallery for workshop timings.	For exhibitions/events. Also e-newsletters. National Railway Museum and others for buying books. National Trust as preparation for visit.
'Treasures of the East Midlands' as a name?	Implies old, historical 'things' or places. Some thought it implied things of monetary value and would prefer something that encompassed people and contemporary issues.	All liked the name. Several of the children thought 'treasures' are gold/silver or limited to history, but most adults thought it was much broader (places, artefacts, buildings, people etc) and suggested secrets/adventures.	Liked the name, but did not really understand the 'East Midlands' as a region. Wanted the website to link to West Midlands, 'East Anglia', Bedfordshire etc, presenting the same sort of historical information.
Zooming images	(Did not demonstrate.)	Much enthusiasm from all ages - particularly to help with your own painting. (National Gallery)	Liked it, but do not like plug-ins. (pre-Raphaelites)
Maps (Powerhouse Google maps)	Very enthusiastic. Would use.	General enthusiasm for the old / new photos on the Google Map – particularly from adults.	Liked the 'then and now' concept, but would prefer to see larger images when hovered over – not have to click.
Timeline	BBC History: "Good for school children".	BBC History: children enthusiastic. One adult thought it was too political and all felt that museums should concentrate on social history. Most	Liked Historyworld.net format. BBC History: content limited.

		liked the idea of museum objects on a timeline.	
User comments	Visitors' reviews are quite useful.	Tate Kids: Some interest in visitors' reviews of exhibitions, but generally not interested in commenting on or reading others' comments on objects. No-one knew that museums use Facebook and invite reviews. One or two children mentioned MSN, but others said they would rather talk to their friends face to face.	Brooklyn Museum: Complicated to navigate. Comments/discussion groups only useful if moderated – otherwise become a ramble/nitpicking and a waste of time. Look at other people's comments on shopping sites, but sometimes find reviews (eg hotels) unreliable.
Tagging	Brooklyn Museum: No interest: want to see expert information, not what non experts think.	Caboodle: No interest in tagging others' objects, but children were enthusiastic about other features of Caboodle.	Brooklyn Museum: No interest.
Mobile technology (National Gallery iPhone app)	Minimal interest. 'Niche'.	No interest. All ages wanted to talk to the family group.	Minimal interest.
Topics/themes	Danelaw towns, Ice Age (Creswell), Peak District, Waterways (Foxton), WW2 airfields, migration, Sir Isaac Newton, Mining, Astronomy, people involved in industries.	Brian Clough, Blue John stone, Ice Age (Creswell Crags), Sherwood Forest, WW2 airfields, astronomy/space (Leicester), Joseph Wright, Buildings & castles.	Very broad interest in most topics suggested. Wanted to know the background (eg why was there a Civil War?) and implications on people (social history).
Other	Interested in places in the region. Needs to be intuitive and simple.	Suggested displaying the site on large advertising screens in public spaces.	Speed and simplicity is paramount for websites. Also needs to be publicised. E-newsletters strongly recommended.

6. Summary and recommendations

This research has demonstrated that:

- All user groups currently:
 - Search on **Google** and **Wikipedia** for **places, people, themes** of relevance to museums, rather than searching museum collections websites directly
 - Search on Google for museum **visit information** and are not concerned about the source of the information, which could come from a **TIC** etc, rather than from the museum's own website.
 - Search for their own town or the place they want to visit, eg the Peak District. The **'East Midlands'** was not generally understood or used.
- All users say they would use **interactive maps**, if available.
- Families and visitors say they would use **zooming images**, if available.
- Children say they would use **timelines**, if available.
- All user groups would like to see content relating to **social history**, including implications of historical objects to people, how people lived etc.

The e-learning and Learn with Museums consultation demonstrated that teachers are very keen to download **video and audio** for use in the classroom (if technical barriers can be resolved) and feel that 'local people' would like to upload their own images stories etc.

Ofcom and the Office for National Statistics have demonstrated widespread public interest in downloading **video, podcasts** and in accessing **user-generated content**.

'Virtually There' (see appendix A) demonstrated that users were not overwhelmingly impressed with East Midlands museums collections websites and expect to see a broad range of additional features, particularly:

- Objects linked together using **categories, themes, narratives**
- **Layered information**
- Appropriate media including **sound, video, 3d animation**
- Explore collections and objects through interaction including **zooming, navigating spaces**
- **Two-way dialogue** with staff
- Opportunity to **share views and content** (recommendations, own objects and interpretation of collections)
- Find out **where objects can be seen**.

In addition, Virtually There showed that:

- Families and adults planning a visit would like to see **testimonials / endorsements** from other visitors
- Families and pupils researching would like to see **interactive challenges and activities**
- Families would like to see **recommendations** for other sites and museums.
- Adults planning a visit are looking for a taster, points of connection with the collections or exhibitions, **key objects to see**
- Pupils researching are looking for clear reliable information on a specific **topic, familiar search terms** (eg Victorians) and images that can be downloaded.

Evidence for **tagging** and **mobile output** is not yet proven, but may emerge in the Find Your Talent report.

RECOMMENDATIONS arising from the consultation with users and analysis of previous user research

To satisfy the needs of museum visitors, including family groups, and to attract adult web surfers:

1. Object information should include **place** metadata and **thematic** information to ensure it is picked up in relevant Google searches. Tags must use terms familiar to children and non-specialist audiences.
2. Objects must have a **persistent URL** to ensure visibility to Google etc.
3. Ensure that museum visit information on **TIC sites/Culture24** is **up to date** as visitors may not use the museum's own website for this information
4. Check information relating to museum's key collections/themes on **Wikipedia** and update if necessary. Submit links from existing thematic entries on Wikipedia to museum sites.
5. Reconsider developing a website which includes the '**East Midlands**' in its name. Users – particularly from outside the region - may well be put off by this name.
6. Consider providing audiences with the following website features:
 - a. **interactive maps**
 - b. **zooming images**
 - c. **sound/video/animation**
 - d. opportunity for users to **seek dialogue with staff** – ideally via moderated bulletin boards to which staff reply within a few days.
 - e. opportunity to **share views and content** (eg recommendations and personal stories or participation in specific projects/calls for content)
 - f. Information on **where objects can be seen and key objects at a particular museum**
 - g. Interactive **activities/challenges** for families and pupils
 - h. Recommendations and links to **other websites and museums**
 - i. **Images that can be downloaded** to be used in children's homework (ie non-commercial use)
 - j. Register for **email updates/newsletter**.
7. **Investigate options and costs** (particularly for content creation and graphic design) of creating **timelines**. Consider option of linking/reusing an existing timeline system – eg Historyworld.net¹¹ or content from the British Museum timelines of history¹².

¹¹ www.historyworld.net

¹² <http://www.worldtimelines.org.uk/>

8. Consider **deferring tagging** and **mobile output** to phase 2, subject to results of Find Your Talent research.
9. Object information should be '**layered**' (eg click for more detail) and linked to **thematic/social or cultural** content.

Next steps

Renaissance East Midlands should conduct a feasibility study to investigate museums' interest in participating in the project, consult with other stakeholders and advise on options for development.

Fiona Marshall would like to thank Heather Lomas and Nicky Boyd for their advice on conducting focus groups and Bryony Robins and Caroline Moore from Renaissance East Midlands for their help and support throughout this study. Thanks are also due to the participants in the focus groups and interviews.

Appendix A: Audience research / evaluation projects

'**Virtually There**: Understanding audiences for online collections resources in the East Midlands', Morris Hargreaves McIntyre for Renaissance East Midlands, March 2009¹³

This research programme was conducted by consultants Morris Hargreaves McIntyre for Renaissance East Midlands and completed in March 2009. The purpose of the research was to build a more complete understanding of online audiences for museums' digital collections in order to inform a more strategic, user-focused approach to content delivery. Researchers analyzed usage statistics from a number of East Midlands museums' collections websites and conducted an online survey of website visitors. The same sites were then shown to potential users in a series of interviews and discussion groups.

By segmenting users into 10 'modes' (see below), the consultants looked at people's motivations for using online collections resources and made very useful suggestions for designing new sites aimed at specific audience needs (pp24-30 & 48-56). Of particular relevance to Treasures, all user modes expect (among other things):

- Objects to be linked together using categories, themes, narratives
- Layered information
- Appropriate media including sound, video, 3d animation
- To explore collections and objects through interaction including zooming, navigating spaces
- Two-way dialogue with staff
- Opportunity to share views and content (recommendations, own objects and interpretation of collections)
- To know where objects can be seen.

Specific user modes have the following specific needs:

- **Families planning a visit** like, among other things, endorsement from other people via testimonials and comments.
- **Families following up on a visit** like interactive challenges and activities they can explore together and recommendations for other sites and museums.
- **Adults planning a visit** are looking for a taster, points of connection with the collections or exhibitions, visitor information, key objects to see and information about events, new content and endorsements from other visitors.
- **General interest surfers** need a strong reason to stay on the website. They are particularly interested in places, people and personal/social histories and interpretation must contextualize objects in the wider historical period and social circumstances. They expect the site to use multimedia tools and they want to be able to interact with experts and other users.
- **Pupils researching** are looking for clear reliable information on a specific topic, familiar search terms (eg Victorians), images that can be downloaded and interactive activities/games.

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- **Hobbyist researching** need a clear overview of the extent and nature of the collection, comprehensive catalogue with a high quality search, contact details of relevant staff for enquiries and links to more specialist resources.
- **Professional/academic researching** look for technical detail rather than context plus contact details and links to specialist resources.
- **Teacher planning a lesson** looks for activities they can repurpose, links to the curriculum and endorsements from other teachers. Resources must not be blocked by the school's firewall. They want to use museum objects online using images, video, animation, sound when relevant and are often interested in locally focused content.
- **Teacher planning a visit** needs practical details and details of topics, taught sessions etc. Also pre and post visit activities to use in the classroom.

The online survey demonstrated that:

- With the exception of 'Picture the Past' and the Derby Peregrines, the majority of visitors were first time users.
- The main user mode was 'Hobbyist researching'. (Note requirements above...)
- Most site users had never visited the physical institution
- One in five users said their needs were not met satisfactorily by the website
- 58% said they were quite or very likely to visit a museum or library featured on the site (but of course this is not proof that they will do so in practice).

Overall (online and interviews – VT pp31-38):

- Many respondents were unaware of the websites before taking part in the research. (MHM recommended **communicating the existence of the site** and the benefits of using it to the target user modes.)
- Some of the resources lack a clear proposition when landing on the homepage so visitors were confused about what the site was offering and why they should stay
- Many respondents were confused about who the resources were aimed at. (MHM recommended that **target user modes** should be defined from the outset and outcomes, content and structure designed with this in mind.)
- The biggest issue in terms of site design was with online collections resources embedded within **council** pages.

“Although the resource is part of a museum funded by the council, users do not automatically associate online collections resources with council services, and the primary proposition of a collections source must be ‘visit the museum’ or ‘explore collections’ – not ‘use a council service’. Sites branded in this way made the resources appear dull and/or confusing, and made it easy for users to drift away or click off the resource.

In a competitive market, museum-based online collections resources need to be able to clearly communicate their proposition and have sites comparable with those of their commercial competitors.

Recommendation: whilst councils may get kudos and web hits from having museum and collections resource sites embedded within the overall council page, this only serves to confuse users and reduces usage. Sites would be better used and better liked if they were able to have independent identities, and could still be associated with the council through reciprocal links.”

- Many respondents felt that the resources could embrace multimedia tools and interactivity to deliver the content in the most appropriate ways. Many would have

welcomed the inclusion of video clips or using images that contextualize objects in room settings. (MHM recommended that resources need to be designed with future expectations in mind, eg with the flexibility to include other elements at a later date. They also recommended embedding YouTube videos, but note that YouTube is blocked by many schools et al.)

- Users expected to be able to **register for updates** eg new object/event information.

Other research

Portrait of a region proposed the creation of a portal *“that will enable the East Midlands to develop a distinctive identity and competitive advantage from its wide range of cultural resources and assets”*.

Ofcom, ‘The Communications Market 2008’

“Content on demand – consumers of all ages are showing a growing interest in accessing audio-visual content online; 17% of those with broadband watched TV over the internet, up by eight percentage points on 2006 – and this is particularly apparent among younger people. Responding to this trend, a range of broadcasters have begun to make their content available for download or streaming online (Sky, Channel 4, ITV Plc, the BBC) but consumers are just as interested in user-generated content, and many regard it as being as valuable as its professionally-produced counterpart.”

(<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/cmr08/converge/>)

*“Twenty-six per cent of those aged 15-24 claim to **use the internet for ‘watching TV programmes’** in 2008, up by 16 percentage points in twelve months. Fifty-one per cent used it for **‘watching video clips/webcasts’**, also up by 16 percentage points over the same period.”*

(<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/cmr08/>)

*“Television is the main source for UK and world news and entertainment for nearly 70% of consumers. TV is also the medium that 55% of people would miss most if it was taken away. However, those aged **16-24** who had broadband in their homes claimed that they would **miss the internet (47%) more than TV (41%)**. “*

*“The number of people who have listened to **podcasts** increased to 6.0 million in May 2008, (up by 40% on the figure six months earlier), with 3.7 million using this facility every week, (up by 95% in six months). Podcast listening habits differ from those for traditional radio; 44% of podcast listening takes place in the evening (rather than the normal breakfast peak for radio), and two-thirds (66%) of podcasters listened through a portable music device. In addition, 15% of listeners to podcasts said they listened to more live radio since they began downloading podcasts (10% said they listened less) and 31% said they would be interested in paying for podcasts that were advertising free.”*

“The majority of children aged 5-7 have access to the internet and most children aged 8-11 have access to a mobile phone. Children are more likely to use the internet for instant messaging than for email.”

Office of National Statistics, Internet Access 2008 First Release,

(<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/iahi0808.pdf>)

*“The proportion of UK **households without an Internet connection** fell to 35 per cent in 2008. The most common response, when adults were asked why their household did not have an Internet connection, was that they did not need it (34 per cent). The last time adults were asked why they did not have an Internet connection was in 2006. Since then, while overall numbers are down, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of adults who stated they did not want the Internet, from 3 per cent in 2006 to 24 per cent in 2008.*

Adults under 70 who had a degree or equivalent qualification were most likely to have access to the Internet in their home, at 93 per cent. Those individuals who had no formal qualifications were least likely to have an Internet connection in their home, at 56 per cent.

As in 2007, men were more likely to access the Internet than women (75 per cent compared with 66 per cent respectively). Adults aged 65 plus were still the least likely to use the Internet, with 70 per cent stating they had never used it, down from 82 per cent in 2006.

Almost three quarters of men (73 per cent) now use the Internet every day or almost every day, compared with two thirds of women (66 per cent).

%Male users, % Female users, % All...

Listening to web radios or watching web television 41 27 34

Uploading self-created content (text, images, photo, video) 25 24 24

Downloading or watching movies, short films or videos 29 17 23”

National Collections Online Feasibility Study (Flow Associates, in preparation)

“Universal McGann’s survey of 17,000 Internet users worldwide in March 2008 highlighted several key findings:

83% watch video clips, up from 62% in the last study in June 2007

78% read blogs, up from 66%

57% of internet users are now members of a social network

RSS consumption is growing rapidly up from 15% to 39%

Podcasts are now mainstream digital content, listened to by 48%

Social networks have been “a key driver for the growth of social media”:

22% of social network users have installed a widget or applications

55% have shared photos

22% have shared their videos

31% have started a blog”

Appendix B: Themes/topics

These topics were used during the focus groups. It must be stressed that this list is just a start and will of course be added to.

The East Midlands leads the country in/is unique in its coverage of the following:

People

- Thomas Cook/travel (Loughborough)
- Lord Byron (Nottinghamshire)
- Brian Clough (Derby)
- WG Hoskins (Univ of Leicester)
- DH Lawrence (Nottinghamshire)
- Migration, refugees, asylum seekers
- Sir Isaac Newton (Grantham)
- Joe Orton (Leicester University Library)
- Alan Sillitoe
- South Asian culture (Leicester, Nottingham)
- Tennyson (Lincolnshire)
- Sue Townsend (Leicester)

Places / environment

- Blue John stone (Derbyshire, Nottingham caves)
- Bottle kicking (Hallaton, Leics)
- Danelaw towns
- Ice Age (Creswell Crags)
- Law courts (Galleries of Justice Nottingham)
- Lincoln cathedral
- Oakham Castle / Horseshoes (Rutland)
- Sir John Moore school (Leicestershire)
- Southwell cathedral
- Peak District (Derbyshire)
- Sherwood Forest (Nottinghamshire)
- Waterways (Foston Locks and inclined plane)
- Well-dressing (Derbyshire)
- Workhouses (Southwell)
- World War 2 airfields (Lincs), Covert operations (Harrington)

Industries and crafts

- Agriculture
- Astronomy/space (Leicester)
- Basket weaving (Donington?)
- Bell making (Loughborough)
- Boots the chemist
- Camera lenses: Jessops/Jacobs?
- Corsetry (Market Harborough)
- Fashion (Courtaulds, Next, Sari songs, Paul Smith etc)

- Food making: Bakewell pudding (Derbyshire), Pork pies, Sausages, Stilton (Melton)
- Framework knitting (Ruddington, Wigston)
- Gimson furniture
- Hosiery (Leicester, Nottinghamshire)
- Jet engines / Frank Whittle (Lutterworth)
- Lace-making (Nottingham)
- Mining: Coal (Coalville, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire), Lead (Derbyshire)
- Palitoy
- John Player's cigarettes (Nottingham)
- Quarrying: Ironstone (Northamptonshire), Slate (Collyweston/Swithland)
- Railways (Great Central, Princess Royal etc)
- Raleigh bicycles
- Rolls Royce (Derby)
- Shoemaking (Northampton)
- Steam mills (Derbyshire)
- Steelmaking (Corby)
- Trams (Crich)
- Typewriters: Empire and Imperial

Art

- German expressionist art (Leicester)
- Glass jellyfish (Czech – Nottingham)
- Picasso ceramics/Richard Attenborough (Leicester)
- Joseph Wright (Derby)

Other strengths:

- Buildings, castles (English Heritage, National Trust etc)
- Charnea fossil (Leicester)
- Civil War (Naseby, Newark)
- Foxhunting (Melton Mowbray)
- Local dialects (EMOHA)
- Market Towns
- Medieval times (Donington le Heath, Bosworth Battlefield, Lincoln)
- Romans (Leicester, Lincoln)
- Salvation Army (Nottingham)
- Tudors (Donington le Heath, Gainsborough Hall)
- Victorians (Eastwood, Papplewick, Abbey Pumping Station et al)

Appendix C: Websites demonstrated in focus groups

Maps

- Powerhouse Museum: <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/flickr/sv-index.php?page=2> (Uses Flickr and Google Maps Street View to present archive images.)

Zooming images

- National Gallery: www.nationalgallery.org.uk/collection
- Pre-Raphaelites: <http://www.preraphaelites.org/> (needs plugin)

Timelines

- BBC History: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_british.shtml
- www.historyworld.net. (A very wide ranging history of the world, written by Bamber Gascoigne. Museums, libraries and archives can [could?] link their objects to the system's timelines:
<http://www.historyworld.net/timelines/existing.asp?gtrack=orig>)

User comments

- Brooklyn Museum: <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/>
- Tate Kids: <http://kids.tate.org.uk/> : see Blog and My Gallery

Tagging

- Brooklyn Museum: <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/collections/> - see Freeze tag
- Caboodle: <http://www.caboodle.org.uk> (Culture24's pilot site for children to upload pictures of - and discuss - their collections.)

Mobile technology

- National Gallery iPhone app: <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/news/iphone-app>

Appendix D: Detailed analysis: Adult web surfers, not museum visitors

Demographics

One female 18-30, five males: one 18-30, one 31-50, two 51-65 and one over 65.

One man of African Caribbean origin.

The younger three people knew each other. All live in Leicester.

This group was asked to complete an **online survey** (on *Survey Monkey*) before the focus group. Questions and results were:

1. What is your favourite website (other than Google, Facebook and the BBC)?

Leicestershire caravan club, Virginmedia, Sky Sports, Wikipedia, You Tube, O2 arena.

2. Do you like any museum websites? If so, please name them.

Two people mentioned the British Museum and one mentioned the British Library.

“Don't really use them, except for work purposes in which case I like them if they have the contact names of the people I want to speak to listed and easy to find. (This is rare.)”

3. Have you tried to find information about a museum object in the last year or so? How did you go about it?

Leicestershire council, Tutankhamun exhibition via Google.

“Not within a year but I did manage to track down a Pictish artifact from Burghead. I e-mailed the website I found a picture of it on and they told me which museum had it so I e-mailed them and they were very helpful.”

4. What kind of objects/topics were you interested in?

Leicestershire historic houses, WW2, stately homes.

“Pictish/Celtic/Medieval/18th & 19th century/WWII”

5. Did you find what you wanted?

Yes (2 out of 2 replies to that question).

6. Age, gender and location

Focus group, 22nd June 2009, Leicester

1. What website(s) do you use as a source of information?

- Most members of this group use **Google for searching/finding information**. They were not interested in which website eventually gave them the information they needed. Several also search **Wikipedia**.

“I'm very interested in history ... but I don't specifically look for a museum site because the word 'museum' doesn't come into it. ... I would go into [*using Google*] the actual name or person involved. I just don't go into museum sites.” (Track 1 - 4.20)

"If I want some historical information, I just Google it." (Track 1 - 7.40)

"I use Wikipedia as a good jumping off point for research." (Track 1 - 10.30)

2. What do you think a website with the name 'Treasures of the East Midlands' might contain?

- Initially, members concentrated on treasure trove and physical places. Most members thought the term '**treasures**' applies to physical things or places rather than people or experiences. Several members felt that 'treasure' implied monetary value. They thought a website with such a name would be aimed at potential visitors to physical sites.
- One member of the group suggested that museums should be as much about **people** and their stories than about 'things' and 'yesteryear'. Other members agreed.

"Is 'Treasure of the East Midlands' the rich cultural heritage in the various places that are worth visiting in Leicester or more specific in terms of artefacts or I assume it's probably both?" (Track 1 - 15.00)

"The East Midlands is a lot more than Leicester. ... The area is a bit of a revelation which nobody outside the East Midlands seems to know anything about. Could almost call it the 'Secret Kingdom of the East Midlands'?" (Track 1 - 15.30)

"Museums should be more about people's contribution, involvement, heritage. Leicester is a forgotten place. ... it's about events and people. Lots of people focus on the physical thing ... and a trick is being lost with industry which is fairly unique. Forces/RAF/why people migrated here. ... Also bring it up to date. Museums don't need to be historic; can be contemporary... if you don't do that then you'll be in a single thought that you're looking at relics." (Track 1 - 18.00)

"There should be more emphasis on social and cultural history involving people."

"'Treasures' implies something physical."

"Stereotypical"

"First thing we talked about was treasure trove/hoards, which it automatically brings up."

"We should move away from it [*the yesteryear*]." (Track 1 - 22.30)

"[eg Donington le Heath] ... more interesting when something being acted out than just walking round." (Track 1 - 23.00)

"First World War trench at Newark Houses ... really interesting ... and brought it home to them [children] privations people went through so they can walk around and play on their Playstations."

"'Treasure' means moneyed thing, value. Brings it down to the physical gold hoard type of thing." (Track 1 - 24.00)

"'Treasure the East Midlands' might lead to people saying 'why?' and brings out the inquisitive nature.'" (Track 1 - 25.00)

“Root it more in more recent history, social/cultural history, might start to see a wider or different audience.”

“I would go to a museum to look at animals, birds and butterflies. For history, I go to a book or a website – not a museum.”

3. Tick those topics/themes you might be interested in and write other suggestions on the chart.

“Some places I’d never even heard of. I didn’t know there was a castle in Oakham [or Leicester].” (Track 2 - 00)

Have you ever tried to find any information about any of those subjects on the list or that you added onto the list?

- Suggestions for the new website included a guide to **places/events in the East Midlands**.

“I’ve tried look through ‘Days out in Leicester’ website. A lot of these you’ve got are not on there anyway. It puts them into weird categories like activities, historical sites. Sometimes you just want to go and look at the countryside.” (Track 2 - 1.15)

“... quite difficult to find something specific to the East Midlands (eg Danelaw in the East Midlands).”

“...is this supposed to be a really good guide to the East Midlands to uncover interesting facts that might appeal to tourists and locals alike?”

“... rather than just a museum website.”

“...find things you didn’t think you were interested in ... all in one place. What’s going on. Things not advertised.”

4. This is what you might be able to do on the new website [slide listing main features: topics, images, read, video, timeline, museum objects, you could comment/add personal stories, read other people’s comments, contribute to discussion, tag objects with your own suggestions for fit with new themes/topics, access information on your mobile phone/download information].

Is there anything missing from that list?

- The group assumed that museums wanted to use the new website to reach potential visitors. (The moderator should probably have made the purpose of the site clearer, but this assumption is interesting from a marketing point of view.)

“Why would I want to go to the museum if I could get all that online?”

“Needs to address my need first: I would want to go to a specific museum. Otherwise why would I go to the website?”

“But you might be interested in Daniel Lambert and not know he is in Leicester.”

“Depends on purpose of the website. If to promote museums, as long as in-depth is useful research tool, but need to be careful it’s not an online museum. But if the purpose is to get people through the door...”

“Haven’t got time to wander onto a website. Would go there for something specific.”

“Images would attract younger people.”

One person liked You Gov: “millions of topics – can get to them quite easily.”

Shown example websites and asked what they think

Google map (Powerhouse Museum¹⁴)

- When shown a range of ‘best practice’ websites, a Google **map with archive and modern images** of the same location was most enthusiastically received. Several said that they would use a system like that.

“That would interest me.”

“I like that.”

“Brilliant.”

“People spend a long time looking at old photographs and try to work out where it is in relation to current thing. It really grips people. I think something like that [would work].”

“...all the sites around the East Midlands. I’d be interested.”

Timelines (BBC History¹⁵)

- As above, the group assumed that museums wanted to use the new website to reach potential visitors. **Virtual visitors** were hardly mentioned until the moderator suggested that schools, people at distance etc were also target audiences.

“Good source of research for schoolchildren – GCSE history – but not so good to get people into the museum.”

User comments (Brooklyn Museum¹⁶)

- There was some interest in reading others’ **comments** on and **reviews** of museums/objects, but several members cautioned that some people have vested interests and use reviews as a means of protest.

“I often find these reviews suspect because there are often people who have a vested interest and they create reviews. You can tell that the same person is writing multiple reviews and if they want to do damage to a particular product they can manipulate/ bombard it.” (Track 2 - c30)

“Good way of getting younger people involved and connected to society, isn’t this exactly right?”

¹⁴ <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/flickr/sv-index.php?page=2>

¹⁵ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_british.shtml

¹⁶ <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/>

“Genuine comments are interesting.”

“If you’re interested in going to something, you have a look at visitors’ reviews, not just media reviews. Usually quite useful.”

Tagging (Brooklyn Museum¹⁷)

- There was a uniform lack of enthusiasm for **tagging** collections with users’ own words. All members wanted factually accurate information created by experts.

“I’m less sure about that. It’s important to me that it’s factually accurate.” (Track 2 - 35)

“If it’s coming from a museum you’d expect the museum to tag it as what it is.”

“Not syphon through a hundred people saying I think it looks like this...”

“I don’t see the point.”

Downloadable gallery tour (National Gallery¹⁸)

- This group were not particularly enthusiastic about **phone-based/mobile/GPS** technology, but recognised that it might appeal to some visitors.

“Niche thing. If you have an iPhone.”

“Niche.”

Overall:

“Caution: needs to be intuitive and simple, get to the part that you’re interested in. Too many gizmos can be too much fiddling.”

“Map on the iPhone telling you how to get there [would be good]?...”

¹⁷ <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/collections/> - see Freeze tag

¹⁸ National Gallery iPhone app: <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/news/iphone-app>

Appendix E: Detailed analysis: Families

Focus group, Sunday 28th June 2009, Derby

Demographics

4 families: 1 father, 3 mothers, 4 boys (6, 11, 11, 14) and 2 girls (8 and 10)

1 father & 11 year old son, 1 mother with son (11) and daughter (8), 1 mother with 6 year old boy (both of Asian origin) and 1 mother with son (14) and daughter (10).

None of the families knew each other.

All live in/near Derby.

1. What website(s) do you use as a source of information?

Use search engines (mostly Google) to find places to visit and for historical research. One family mentioned Derby Museum and Art Gallery website for workshop timings. Several use Wikipedia – eg for information on Henry VIII.

“I have used museum websites. I am looking for workshops going on in the museum and the timings when they are open in holidays and half term – like Derby Museum and Art Gallery etc.” (Mother of 6 year old - track 1 – 4:35)

“When you go to a museum, the information there about the objects - there’s a limit to the information – a specified area - but if it’s on a website, you can have a lot more information about the objects and you can have time to sit down and go through all that information.” (Mother of 6 year old - track 1 – 5:15)

“We’ve looked about Charles Darwin in our school topics so we went on the Natural History Museum website. There was loads of stuff when you type it into Google, but the first one was the Natural History Museum.” (Boy, 11 – track 1 – 5:45)

“Henry VIII – I did it on Wikipedia and it came up with some of his swords and armour and pictures.” (Girl, 10 – track 1 – 6:25)

“If we’re going to go to an area I tend to put in a town [on Google] and it brings up a host of sites – and there’s generally a tourist information one.” (Father – track 1 – 8:30)

2. What do you think a website with the name ‘Treasures of the East Midlands’ might contain? Write your ideas on the flipchart (one per family).

Several of the children thought ‘treasures’ are gold/silver or limited to history, but most adults thought it was much broader (places, artefacts, buildings, people etc). All said they liked the name.

“We thought of precious metals because you think of gold and silver.” (8 year old girl)

“If something’s a treasure, it’s precious to you and that could be anything - something special or unique. I talked about the Derby logboat, because that’s very special and unique but neither of them [the children] thought that was a treasure.” (Mother) (Track 2 – 11:00)

“We talked about [the meaning of] East Midlands – whether it had to be things made here (made me think of the industrial revolution etc) or whether it could be things that *are* here (eg Egyptian).” (Mother)

“The fact that Treasures is plural rather than singular opens your mind - brings a different context. Implies adventures on your own doorstep. Makes you interested.” (Father – track 2 – 15.50)

3. Showed example websites and asked what they think

Commenting on objects/submitting own work: Tate Kids¹⁹

Little enthusiasm for commenting on objects and children generally against commenting on other children’s work. Little interest in reading others’ comments, although there was some interest in reading other visitors’ reviews of exhibitions.

“I’m generally after information rather than trying to counter it.” (Father - Track 3 – 4.20)

“I look at peoples’ comments on campsites.” (Father)

“You are persuaded by those.” (Mother - track 3 – 5.00)

“I don’t like the idea of commenting on someone else’s work. Could cause arguments. ... (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 7:50)

“I don’t see the point of it [commenting on work by a famous painter].” (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 8:25)

Google map (Powerhouse Museum²⁰)

General enthusiasm for the old / new photos on the Google Map – particularly from adults.

“Personally, I like that. Very interesting to see what something was like many years ago.” (Father – track 3 – 11.30)

“Accessible and clean, appealing.” (general agreement)

“Can you comment on that?” (Mother – track 3 – 12.00)

(Moderator told them about Tate Art map, but did not demonstrate.)

User comments (Caboodle²¹)

Several of the children were enthusiastic and interested in finding out what other people collect.

“That is very good. If you like collecting something like a special type of card you can see if anyone else collects them and see what they’ve got.” (Boy, 11 – track 3 – 14.25)

“It’s quite good because you can see what’s there - it’s not really complicated. Not loads of categories – it’s been cut down to less.” (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 16.25)

¹⁹ <http://kids.tate.org.uk/> : see Blog and My Gallery

²⁰ <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/flickr/sv-index.php?page=2>

²¹ <http://www.caboodle.org.uk>

"I like that you can type in what you want to find out about." (Boy, 11 – track 3 – 16.45)

"Is it encouraging people to collect responsibly, to look after their things?" (Mother – track 3 – 17.30)

Zooming in (National Gallery²²)

Much enthusiasm from all ages for zooming into the detail of paintings - particularly to help with your own painting.

"If you're doing a project in art, it's good to see how people have done it instead of looking at a photograph ... know how to do it, it's easier." (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 19.35)

"A really brilliant idea" (Mother – track 3 – 19.45)

"So you can see different techniques." (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 20.00)

"Enables you to bring it into your house. Probably more chance to look at it than ... once in a blue moon you decide to go down to where it's actually on. ... Opens it up to the public arena even more than it is now – makes it even more accessible." (Father – track 3 – 20.15)

Timelines (BBC History²³)

The children were very enthusiastic about the BBC timeline. One adult thought it was too political and all felt that museums should concentrate on social history. Most participants liked the idea of museum objects on a timeline.

"I like it. You don't have to go for all the information. The important one is there - like bullet points – these 3 things are important points about this painting." (Mother of 6 year old – track 3 – 23.45)

"It looks really easy to use." (Boy, 11 – track 3 – 24.20)

"If you were doing a project at school, would go to a certain period in history ... and it's got major events that you could put into your work." (Girl, 10 – track 3 – 24.35)

"I like the idea of having objects on there – that's something a museum could offer. ... Otherwise the kids are just copying out lists." (Mother – track 3 – 25.00)

"Lots of different events to choose from." (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 25.35)

"I love the visual representation: it's very appealing. Could have links to what they wore etc." (Mother – track 3 - 25.55)

"... drill down on those points. ... Might be a link to where on a map or whatever. Good way of displaying. Quick and easy. (Father – track 3 – 26.15)

²² www.nationalgallery.org.uk/collection

²³ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_british.shtml

“People don’t always know the flow of history. Good to show on the screen.” (Mother – track 3 – 26.35)

“Highly political – not much social history. It’s all about the Tudor monarchs - not how people lived in Tudor times and I suspect that’s what museums in the East Midlands might have more about. Nice to know how people lived.” (Mother – track 3 – 27.05)

“Could be linked in.” (Mother – track 3 – 27.30)
(General agreement on interest in social history.)

“Problematic... Does not show how events are linked.” (Mother – track 3 – 28.40)

“There’s such a vast amount of information isn’t there? It’s how do you get that all condensed. ... Social history is more interesting but kids still need factual points. It could all be interconnected but [the problem] is sifting out which bit you take and which you don’t.”
(Mother – track 3 – 29.50)

Mobile technology (National Gallery²⁴)

No interest in using mobile phones in galleries to get information. All ages wanted to talk to the family group.

“I wouldn’t really like to have a mobile phone on show ... would prefer to have something in front of me that you can read and look at rather than listen to somebody speaking to you.” (Girl, 10 – track 3 – 31.29)

“I’ve got 5 kids – what if they haven’t all got the up to date phone? Seven of us walking around the gallery [listening on phones] ...not really interacting, are we?” (Mother – track 3 – 32.20)

“This [digital info] is all good stuff for finding out what you might see before you go or following up when you come back. When you’re there with your family it’s nice to have a conversation about what you see and what’s gone on. If you want to do some more research that’s something you do when you get back. I’ve not got into taking an iPod around telling me what it’s all about: I think you lose that human interaction.” (Father – track 3 – 32.45)

Social networking tools

Asked what technology people use to communicate with their friends

No-one knew that museums use Facebook and invite reviews. One or two of the children mentioned MSN, but others said they would rather talk to their friends face to face.

“I find Facebook swamps you after a while. It’s almost too much.” (Mother – track 3 – 34.30)

“Twitter... If Stephen Fry says “go to Derby Museum”, they would be queuing out the door because it’s who it is [spreading the message]. It’s just another medium to spread news.”
(Father – track 3 – 35.50)

²⁴ National Gallery iPhone app: <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/news/iphone-app>

"I don't really like the idea of people typing to you because it could get upsetting." (Girl, 8 – track 3 – 36.50)

"I don't let them [use MSN etc]. We've had stuff from school where there's been quite a few instances of cyberbullying." (Mother – track 3 – 37.00)

"[That was] texting. It's just better to talk to somebody. People would say mean things that they wouldn't say to your face." (Boy, 11 – track 3 – 37.20)

"[Son] chats to his friends on World of Warcraft." (Mother – track 3 – 38.00)

"But only to people I know." (Boy, 14)

4. Tick those topics/themes you might be interested in and write other suggestions on the chart.

Starred objects: Brian Clough, Blue John stone, Ice Age (Creswell Crags), Sherwood Forest, WW2 airfields, astronomy/space (Leicester), Joseph Wright, Buildings & castles.

Has anyone tried to find information on the web about any of these subjects?

"We did the Victorians, Tudors and Romans at school when we went into the IT suite. Used Google and looked around at different sites. Haven't done any follow-up work at home." (Boy, 11 – track 4 – 1.25)

"I went to find out about the Space Centre. We were going on a school trip and I just wanted to see what it was about. Used Google, which was good." (Girl, 10 – track 4 – 2.00)

"Sir Francis Drake's galleon... We're doing Tudor exploration and we go onto Google to find different things about the history of it all." (Girl, 8 – track 4 – 2.30)

"[Son, 6] doing a play for Henry VIII and I went in [to the internet] to see history of Tudors. And then they were doing a project about galaxies and space. I'm learning now!" (Mother of 6 year old – track 4 – 3.05)

Other suggestions: Show the system on advertising screens in public spaces. (Track 4 – 00)

Appendix F: Detailed analysis: Visitors

Interviews, Tuesday 1st July 2009, Northampton Museum

Demographics

Couple in their 50s from New Zealand visiting relatives. Frequently visit museums at home.

1. What website(s) do you use as a source of information?

Specialist clubs, shopping. Fast, simple to use sites. (You Tube is too complicated.)

Also NZ museum sites for exhibitions/events. Subscribe to and like NZ museums' e-newsletters. National Railway Museum and others for buying books.

Visited National Trust as preparation for their visit to the UK.

2. What do you think a website with the name 'Treasures of the East Midlands' might contain?

Liked the name, but did not really understand the 'East Midlands' as a region. Wanted the website to link to West Midlands, 'East Anglia', Bedfordshire etc, presenting the same sort of historical information.

3. Showed example websites and asked what they think

Zooming (pre-Raphaelites²⁵): Liked it, but do not like plug-ins.

Timelines (BBC History²⁶ and Historyworld.net²⁷)

Liked Historyworld.net format.

BBC content limited ("I know of certain things that I would expect to see but they're not there.")
(Note: some BBC content is inaccessible to overseas ISPs.)

Google map (Powerhouse Museum²⁸)

Liked the 'then and now' concept, but would prefer to see larger images when hovered over – not have to click.

User comments (Brooklyn²⁹)

"Jolly complicate [to navigate Brooklyn's comments area]. You've got to know what you're looking for."

Comments/discussion groups only useful if moderated – otherwise become a ramble/nitpicking and a waste of time. Look at other people's comments on shopping sites, but sometimes find reviews (eg hotels) unreliable.

Tagging objects: No interest.

²⁵ <http://www.prerafaelites.org/> (needs plugin)

²⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_british.shtml

²⁷ <http://www.historyworld.net/timelines/existing.asp?gtrack=orig>

²⁸ <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/flickr/sv-index.php?page=2>

²⁹ <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/>

Downloadable gallery tour (National Gallery³⁰): Minimal interest.

4. Tick those topics/themes you might be interested in and write other suggestions on the chart.

Very broad interest in most topics suggested. Wanted to know the background (eg why was there a Civil War?) and implications on people (social history).

Other suggestions: Speed and simplicity is paramount for websites. Also needs to be publicised. E-newsletters strongly recommended.

³⁰ National Gallery iPhone app: <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/news/iphone-app>