

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY 2018-2022

Extending reach, growing reputation
and building resource

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SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

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1 Context

1.1 Background

International working is natural for world-leading national museums. It is both a *means* of delivering the Group's overall strategic ambitions, and an *outcome* of success in achieving them. The first Science Museum Group International Strategy was approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2012. It launched a new drive to engage at an international level with sectors within the Group's ambit, and recognised the advantages - indeed, the necessity - of collaboration.

That first phase focused on: identifying our place in the science and museum landscapes and developing an offer for potential collaborators; promoting our brand and establishing professional networks among both domestic and overseas stakeholders; and building internal capacity.

We have come a long way. We now have: a flourishing touring exhibition offer; effective partnerships and networks; vastly enhanced profile and reputation; and a distinctly internationalist programme and organisational culture. We have good foundations on which to build.

We remain ambitious, launching consultancy services in 2017, entering new territories such as China and the Middle East, and planning for an international extension to the Academy of Science Engagement. International working is led by the Director of the Science Museum Group, delivered by dedicated teams for Strategy and International and for Touring and Consultancy, supporting and supported by a great many colleagues across the Group.

1.2 External environment

The most obvious and far-reaching factor in international relations at organisation, national and global level is Brexit. The terms and impact of the UK's departure from the European Union are far from clear, but some effects of the 2016 referendum decision and the resulting uncertainty about the economic and academic environment are already being felt. A key impact for the Science Museum Group is increased and explicit government emphasis on extending and deepening the UK's international relations through soft power. The overseas work we already do promotes the values, reputation and 'brands', of the cities and regions where we are based and of the whole UK. The call to the cultural sector is to do more and to maximise the value of this work.

Compared to many other cultural organisations, we have an extra dimension in representing the innovation and creativity in science, technology and engineering that is so important for Britain's economic future. This is expressed in the government's Industrial Strategy (November 2017¹). Our collection demonstrates that Britain has always been a centre of world-leading innovation and entrepreneurship, adding weight and authenticity to the Industrial Strategy claims and objectives for the future. Allied to our expertise in public engagement and STEM learning, this puts us in a unique position to help government to deliver the Industrial Strategy. This includes overseas: the penultimate paragraph of the Industrial Strategy document states:

"We can also do more to embrace the opportunities, and so much emerging innovation, in the wider world. We must do more to export and promote what we do to the world's fastest-growing economies, where there is a strong appetite not only for our goods but our world-class services, from tourism and healthcare to professional and financial services, and for cultural collaboration too".

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730048/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-a4-version.pdf

The Industrial Strategy built on the outcomes of two governmental reviews of museums, the *DCMS Strategic Review of Sponsored Museums* and the *Mendoza Review* that examined the broader sector in England (November 2017^{2,3}). These were themselves recommended by the DCMS *Culture White Paper* (March 2016⁴), in which international is one of four main drivers, stating “*The UK already ranks highly in surveys of soft power and national brand. The government wants our national culture to enhance our global reputation further*”.

The Science Museum takes note of government policy priorities for both practical reasons (e.g. efficiency and unlocking funding), and also for exercising a degree of ‘institutional soft power’ with key stakeholders. However, we cannot be wholly *led* by government objectives because they are wide-ranging, may not always be aligned in helpful ways, and are subject to change on relatively short timescales.

Public funding available to the Science Museum Group is shrinking. Grant in Aid (direct sponsorship from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) is declining, and so is funding from other sources as well, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. This increases the pressure on the Group’s Development team fundraising and, indeed, on the whole organisation to commit to generating additional income in diverse ways. A Comprehensive Spending Review is expected within this strategy period – most likely 2019 – and international working will be a major strand of our funding case to government, both directly and in concert with other partners and stakeholders.

1.3 Internal environment

In 2017 the Science Museum Group published *Inspiring Futures: Strategic Priorities 2017-2030*⁵. One of the seven key priorities is ‘Extending our international reach’. This is the starting point for the current document which fleshes out our plans for 2018-2022, when *Inspiring Futures* is due for review. It also highlights where international intersects with the other strategic priorities. Increasing income is one of these and a Group-wide Income Strategy will be agreed in 2018/19. Also running throughout *Inspiring Futures* is the theme of ‘groupness’, an overt intention to make more of being a family of museums with sites throughout England and with shared mission, values and assets.

Increased international working does not, and will not, detract from the Group’s national interests and presence. In fact, the two areas are mutually supportive. Our increased capacity and capability in moving artefacts and exhibitions for international touring led to more sharing of content in the UK, both within the Science Museum Group and beyond. And the offer itself is new: there was no touring exhibition repertoire before 2015, and internationally-generated acquisitions such as Tim Peake’s Soyuz spacecraft create new opportunities to serve domestic audiences and build our profile. This, in turn, makes us more attractive to collaborators and funders.

The rapid growth and success of the Group’s international activity and profile has raised expectations – internally and externally. We have increased internal capacity, including dedicated posts for Touring Exhibitions and Consultancy and for Strategy and International, but resources continue to be stretched in a highly constrained funding environment, both within these teams and across the organisation more generally. As the Science Museum Group’s international activity continues to grow and involve more people and teams, we have identified a need to formalise some internal systems and processes for communication, participation and governance that have heretofore been able to function on a relatively informal basis.

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673938/Strategic_review_of_DCMS-sponsored_museums.pdf

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673935/The_Mendoza_Review_an_independent_review_of_museums_in_England.pdf

⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510798/DCMS_The_Culture_White_Paper_3_.pdf

⁵ <https://group.sciencemuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Inspiring-Futures-Strategic-Priorities-2017-2030.pdf>

2 Strategy

2.1 Purpose, priorities and principles

The purposes of extending the Science Museum Group's international reach remain to:

- Extend our mission beyond our walls through our international presence and online;
- Enrich our offer for UK audiences at Science Museum Group sites and elsewhere;
- Develop our sector, our organisation and our people through collaboration;
- Generate income, with particular emphasis on sustainable profit;
- Promote our cities, regions and the UK.

International works through, and contributes to, the other Science Museum Group strategic priorities:

- Grow science capital;
- Grow our audiences;
- Sustain and grow our collection;
- Transform our estate;
- Harness the potential of digital;
- Increase income.

Together, these purposes and priorities provide a framework for deciding what we will (and won't) do in our international working, recognising that different weightings will apply in different circumstances. Decision-making also needs to be informed by risk assessment. In general, it is a fact that income generation - specifically income that is unrestricted and sustainable - has risen up the priority rankings and will be a more explicit factor in international working in this period.

Our choice of partners and regions is driven by the diverse factors in this framework. Sometimes we form partnerships that deliver projects and business; in other cases, transactional relationships develop into sustainable partnerships. Broadly, during this strategy period our priority is to develop and grow our work in and with Greater China. We will sustain existing relationships, notably (but not exclusively) in Brazil, India, Russia, Australia and Europe, and we will actively review our approach in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, the United States and South Korea to balance strategic ambition and opportunity with capacity.

The following principles express the Science Museum's approach to international working:

- We will be ambitious in the nature and scope of international working, and realistic about costs and benefits; working through existing workstreams, resources and capacity will be preferred, and new activity justified through transparent processes.
- Within the Group, delivery of international work is by many different teams; the role of Strategy and International is to 'oil the wheels' through coordination and brokering, filtering external approaches, central oversight and drive, advice and support, and optimising value.
- Externally, international work is delivered through collaboration with many organisations and people and different types of relationship; we will be open, honest, reliable and aspirational in our partnerships.
- We will take a long view of the benefits – and potential benefits, both 'hard' and 'soft' – to the Science Museum Group of international working, recognising that building effective relationships and brand awareness takes time and investment.
- The generation of additional, sustainable profit will be an important criterion for all international working, and the primary driver for some workstreams.
- The International Strategy is focused on agreed actions and outcomes, but it is a framework, not a straitjacket; some international working will fall outside the remit of the International Strategy, whilst being important for local, operational, financial or professional reasons; we will continue to respond to new opportunities, some of which arise at short notice and to tight deadlines.

2.2 Extending our international reach: objectives 2018-2022

We will undertake market analysis for designated regions and activities and initiate new collaborations accordingly; China will be the first priority.

- We will refine our approach to touring exhibitions in China, drawing on our experience to date, the *Superbugs* touring exhibition project (2018-20) and additional desk research.
- Refer to the 'Growing science capital' section under 2.3 regarding the Academy of Science Engagement.

We will grow our touring exhibitions programme according to a sustainable business model.

- A new Science Museum Group Exhibitions Strategy will be launched in 2018, under which UK and international touring will be fully integrated into exhibition project planning and delivery. The touring programme will draw upon the proposed new business development unit (see Increase income section under 2.3).

We will strengthen networks for communication and advocacy of Science Museum Group international working.

- Use the new customer relationship management system to record and engage external supporters and stakeholders, in the UK and abroad: to be activated in 2018.
- Plan and run engagement and advocacy events (as resources allow), including both those associated with major exhibitions and one-offs.

We will work closely with UK public sector agencies to add value to each other's work and help maintain the UK's soft power ranking.

and

We will devise specific programmes to promote UK innovation and manufacturing.

- Wherever appropriate and practicable (taking into account the Science Museum Group International Strategy and organisational capacity), we will support UK government-led initiatives such as bilateral years/seasons, the GREAT campaign, and high-profile events. This may be through providing content in the UK and/or abroad; hosting events and inbound visits; participating in outbound delegations and visits; sharing intelligence and other activity. Significant live initiatives under consideration include:
 - UK-Brazil Year of Science, FCO/BEIS, 2018
 - UK-China People to People Dialogue, DCMS + FCO/BEIS/DIT, China, November 2018 (tbc)
 - G20 summit, Buenos Aires, externally-sponsored showing of *Superbugs* at the Centro Cultural de la Ciencia, from November 2018 (tbc)
 - Various AMR initiatives, focused on externally-funded tour of *Superbugs* to China and India, 2018-2022
 - SPARK Festival of Ideas, Hong Kong, British Council, January 2019
 - Dubai Expo, DIT, 2020
 - G20 summit, Riyadh, 2020
- Seek to secure additional funding for international working that is aligned with government priorities, notably through the Industrial Strategy and the Soft Power Strategy and the Comprehensive Spending Review case (anticipated early 2019).
- From 2019 we may undertake feasibility studies for a touring-only offer (i.e. not initially produced for/by a Science Museum Group site) where such activity is aligned with our strategic objectives and a demand can be identified.

Supporting objectives: internal practice

Internal practice needs to keep pace with the increased amount and scope of international working (and other changes throughout the Group). We will refine internal systems and processes to enhance the efficacy, capacity and impact of the Group's international working. Amongst other things, this includes internal communications and decision-making about activity and fundraising. Existing workstreams and structures will be used wherever possible, but the case for additional

resource will also be examined. The customer relationship management system that is being rolled out during 2018 will be invaluable in tracking and sharing our growing international contacts.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Review and refine internal systems, processes and capacity from an international working perspective in the following areas in 2018/19:
 - Internal communications;
 - Understanding costs and benefits;
 - Decision-making and approvals pathways in the context of all the Group aims to do
 - External advocacy and stakeholder engagement;
 - Including all teams/functions and personnel (not only employees) at all levels in international opportunities;
 - Staffing and resources.

2.3 International objectives in other *Inspiring Futures* priorities 2018-2022

Grow science capital in individuals and society

Our pioneering research and practice in science capital for informal STEM learning is a USP of the Science Museum Group. STEM engagement and education attracts a good deal of interest from overseas organisations. The Science Museum Learning and Outreach teams already deliver activities and professional training to teachers, science communicators and researchers internationally. To date, this has been on an ad hoc, reactive basis but the launch of the Science Museum Academy of Science Engagement in autumn 2018 (London) and early 2019 (Manchester) will be a spur to the subsequent development of an international offer that can be sold more systematically and proactively.

There is also potential to undertake collaborative research into science capital with international partners.

Science capital principles underpin all our activity, not just our learning programmes. Thus, our touring exhibitions and other international presence also contribute to extending our mission and fulfilling our science capital strategic priority.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Prepare for the anticipated extension the Academy of Science Engagement into international markets, subsequent to its UK launch in autumn 2018 and a period of operation, through:
 - Informal promotion of the concept, gathering intelligence, testing market and building networks (e.g. speaking at conferences);
 - Formal market research and testing starting in China and other selected countries;
 - Developing a business case, funding strategy and operating model.
- Participate as a partner in the EU-funded COM n PLAY Science research project into the role of play in informal science learning, led by Norwegian University of Science and Technology; June 2018 – May 2021.

Grow our audiences and exceed their expectations

International activity does not only happen abroad. One of the most important benefits is the enrichment of our offer for UK audiences. A distinctly internationalist outlook is evident in our own museums' public programmes, from explicitly foreign content such as the *Illuminating India* season and the *Cosmonauts* exhibition and its legacy initiatives (further exhibitions and displays and the acquisition of Tim Peake's Soyuz spacecraft and Sokol spacesuit) to individual artist commissions for the Manchester Science Festival, from bringing the A4 locomotives from north America for the *Mallard 75* celebrations to the internationally renowned *Widescreen Weekend* festival. At least 20 overseas research institutions and lenders contributed to *The Sun*. Science is an international endeavour and the big issues that face humanity as individuals, as communities and as nations, are global in scale. Not to reflect this would mean telling only partial stories, in both senses of the word. For example, it would be untenable to plan the new gallery on energy and sustainability at the Science Museum without considering international perspectives.

Showing content from other countries is not only necessary in a globalised world and popular with our visitors, it also demonstrates respect for other cultures and reciprocity in partnerships. This enhances our brand and profile abroad, helps to build effective working relationships for future collaboration and to open up markets for paid-for offer.

International content is decided upon according to the needs of the project in question, but some programme elements may be driven by strategic priorities. In the period of this document, the strategic focus is on China and Chinese-related content at Science Museum Group museums. This will serve all audiences but may be expected to resonate with Chinese diaspora communities, especially in Manchester and London, and with the growing number of Chinese tourists to the UK.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Develop and deliver China-related programming at Science Museum Group museums (subject to confirmation):
 - China Lates, Science Museum, January 2019;
 - At least one China-themed contemporary science Topic Zone at the Science Museum;
 - China narratives and content in the Science Fiction exhibition, Science Museum, 2020;
 - Exhibition of railway photographs by Wang Fuchun, National Railway Museum, 2019 and potentially at other SMG museums;
 - Clocks from the Palace Museum, Science Museum 2020;
 - Develop proposals for a temporary exhibition on science and technology in China for showing at that Museum of Science and Industry in 2023 and the Science Museum in 2024, and potentially in China.

Sustain and grow our world-class collection

Developing content for the Group's public programmes includes conducting research at various levels and acquiring items to build a truly world-class collection.

We will leverage our international networks to secure acquisitions and loans for major gallery developments. This often involves a lengthy process of building relationships in both public and private sectors to inspire confidence and trust, and to establish a strong basis for negotiation, but the pay-off can be tremendous; the acquisition of the Soyuz spacecraft would not have been possible without the build-up via the *Cosmonauts* exhibition. We are also looking to Nasa and other non-western national space programmes regarding new aerospace gallery in the Science Museum's Masterplan, and to the railway industry in partner countries regarding the redevelopment of the National Railway Museum Great Hall (see also the 'Transform our estate' section below)

In 2018 we employed the first explicitly international research curatorial fellows and initiated a research consortium to bid for research funding into digital; both of these were Chinese projects. We will build on this experience to identify further opportunities for externally-funded research based on Science Museum Group programmes and interests.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Conduct research into China-related topics relevant to Science Museum Groups programmes and projects, in collaboration with partners in China, the UK and elsewhere:
 - Conclude two Rutherford Curatorial Research Fellowships doing initial scoping research for a possible major temporary exhibition on Science and technology in China; one focused particularly on interrogating our collection; July 2018;
 - Contribute curatorial research consultancy and loans to *Treasures in Time* exhibition of Palace Museum clocks at the Hong Kong Science Museum, opens December 2018;
 - Research for Masterplan projects (e.g. the redevelopment of the Great Hall at the National Railway Museum; the Space Gallery at the Science Museum);
- Be more active and systematic in building research networks to identify, and be prepared for, funding opportunities for research into collections, audience and display that further our international goals.

Transform our Estate

We will use our international networks to secure acquisitions, stories and expertise for major gallery developments. As well as overseas universities and research institutes, and commercial research and manufacturing organisations, this includes UK government departments and agencies and academic bodies overseas, such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and British Embassies, the Department for International Trade, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the British Council, and the Academies.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Develop relationships that help to procure acquisitions and content for Masterplan developments at all sites, including:
 - Great Hall redevelopment at the National Railway Museum, reflecting the global significance of rail and the UK's contribution; live relationships in China and Russia; Great Hall opening anticipated by 2021;
 - New aerospace gallery in the next phase of the Science Museum Masterplan, to include non-Western narratives; focus on the space programmes of China, India and the US; potential also in the United Arab Emirates and Japan;
 - New *City of Ideas* gallery at the Science and Industry Museum, to open late 2020s;
 - New gallery on climate change (energy, sustainability and resilience) at the Science Museum. It would be untenable to tackle this huge global issue without an international perspective; part of Science Museum Masterplan phase 2.

Harness the potential of digital

Through its digital presence, the Group has an opportunity to establish itself as an international brand and to bring its collections and programmes to global audience. C. 30% of online visits already originate overseas.

The first phase of the Science Museum Group Digital Strategy (2015–17) focused on establishing infrastructure that forms the foundations of more ambitious goals. The objectives in the current phase (2018–2021) are to enhance audience experience, increase audience reach, enable audience participation.

Whilst, to date, the Group has not actively and explicitly used digital and online to build international audiences, the coming years will see a significant increase in the volume of digital content (including large-scale collection digitisation) and more rigorously align this content with clearly defined audience needs. The new content and improvements will benefit all users, wherever in the world they are.

We are now looking to establish international collaboration for digital innovation to bring a more international perspective to the Group's digital work and extend the reach of our digital activity.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Conduct research into digital display techniques associated with the clocks exhibition, in collaboration with the Palace Museum, the China Academy of Science and the Beijing Jiaotong University.
- The potential for international partnerships is included in the Audiences of the Future major funding bid to Innovate UK for research and development in creative, commercially viable digital content (subject to successful funding bid).

Increase income

Income from international activity is both direct and indirect. The former includes fees for touring exhibitions, Outreach, training and professional development services, and from Development-led sources such as grants and sponsorship and similar sources.

The indirect contribution takes the form of supporting funding bids – in which an international angle is often an attractive component – making introductions and connections, brokering relationships and promoting the Group externally.

Some specific objectives for 2018-22 are mentioned in the preceding sections. We will also seek to extend the repertoire of our income-generating offer. In 2017 we added the *Soyuz Descent with Tim Peake* VR experience to the touring menu. Further experience and event items will be added and will increasingly be designed with touring and income-generation in mind.

Income is distinct from profit. We will continue to maximise income from a variety of sources to support delivery of the Group's strategic priorities. From 2017 we have offered consultancy services for interactive galleries as an explicitly profit-driven workstream and the first such major project opened at the Queensland Museum in September 2018. We will build on this experience and exposure to grow the market for professional services consultancy in a managed, sustainable way that delivers profit to the organisation. It will be necessary to invest in new and additional expertise, most likely in the form of a dedicated business development unit. This can include selling other income-generating services such as touring exhibitions and extending the Academy of Science Engagement overseas as described in the 'Growing science capital' section above.

Strategic partnerships provide opportunities for generating income and for developing/testing projects, and existing partners will be preferred in the Group's projects where possible. However, profit-generating work may be undertaken with any organisation and in any country. Paid-for collaborations can both develop from, and lead to, sustained strategic relationships

Soft power and cultural diplomacy are increasingly important to government for trade, tourism, security and influence. DCMS has acknowledged the Science Museum Group's emergence as a key player and we continue to widen and deepen our links with other Departments. We will deploy our international success in making the case for funding in the next Comprehensive Spending Review (expected 2019), both on our own behalf and in concert with other cultural organisations.

Objectives 2018-2022

- Grow the consultancy business to generate additional, sustainable profit:
 - Seek to secure a further piece of consultancy work, building on our expertise around interactive galleries;
 - Develop a business model for future years, based on the strength of known opportunities; invest in bringing the right business skills into the organisation;
 - Work towards a target of £350k additional annual profit by 2021-22 (noting that consultancy business is at an early stage of development, which makes it difficult to set hard financial targets).
- Make the case for additional government funding through the anticipated 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review for work by museums – and by the Science Museum Group in particular – that supports UK STEM, trade and soft power agendas.

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