The Uses of Stored Collections in some London Museums

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Little is known about how the stored collections of museums are used. The amount and nature of use in several London museums was analysed by means of a survey sent to a sample of museums and departments. Awareness among museum visitors of the existence of collections was also investigated. The key findings were that many museums do not keep specific records of how often stored objects are used, and that a majority of respondents would like their collections used more, but that obstacles such as lack of staff, documentation problems and physical limitations of stores prevent the increased use of stored collections. A second survey was conducted on visitors to London museums to ascertain how much they knew about stored collections. Contrary to the findings of earlier work in the US and Australia, visitors were well-informed about the existence and uses of stored collections, but less knowledgeable about their size.

Keywords
London museums, visitor satisfaction, surveys.

Introduction

Recently the National Museum Directors' Conference (NMDC) suggested that museums dispose of collections which could be 'more widely used and enjoyed . . . elsewhere . . . Actual levels of use matter. If a collection is usable but in fact largely unused there has to be considerable confidence in its value to future generations to justify present preservation' (NMDC 2003: 3-6). The use of stored collections is thus a benchmark in the decision to retain or deaccession objects. The suggestion presupposes that museums know how often their collections are used, which may not be the case. To gain an accurate picture, it is necessary to compare usage across a range of museums. This study focuses on non-displayed collections, those typically low-profile objects that it may be more difficult to justify retaining. It seeks to determine how much, and in what ways, London museums use their stored collections.

The inaccessibility of museum collections is discussed in several recent publications by government departments and professional bodies, including the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) consultation paper, *Understanding the Future: Museums and the 21st Century*, the aforementioned 2003 NDMC paper, *Too Much Stuff*, and the UK Museums Association (MA) report, *Collections for the Future* (NMDC 2003: 1-20; DCMS 2005: 1-35; Wilkinson 2005: 1-33). These documents point out that museum collections are owned by the public, who have a right to access and enjoy them (Wilkinson 2005: 4-6; NMDC 2003: 12).

The discussion about the accessibility of museum collections, especially non-displayed collections, is relevant given the increasing financial pressure on museums. *Understanding the Future* reminds museum professionals that they have limited resources, and caring for unused collections may not be a good allocation of funds (DCMS 2005: 16). The Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) observes that public money

is spent managing these collections, and museums 'will face the need for increased accountability and this will raise issues about public perceptions of the value of collections and services' (MLA 2005: para. 2). The low use of some collections has impelled certain MPs to call for their deaccession (NDMC 2003: 2). Although disposal is seen to be a solution for the problem of underused collections, Suzanne Keene notes that its money-saving purpose is often undermined by the cost involved in deaccessioning items (Keene 2005: 6).

Despite the negative overtones of accountability and disposal, the conversation about non-displayed collections can focus on solutions and innovative strategies. It is an exciting time in which museums look for imaginative compromises between the needs of staff and visitors, their responsibility to preserve objects and their duty to make them accessible. In her book, *Fragments of the World: Uses of Museum Collections*, Keene explores the uses of collections for research, education, artistic production, digitisation, and enjoyment (Keene 2005: 7-9).

Earlier Work

Other than *Fragments of the World*, there have been relatively few studies investigating how museums use their stored collections. In 1996, the journal *Museum Practice* included a special section on storage in its inaugural issue. However, the articles primarily concentrated on specific case studies or focused on the physical or environmental aspects of storage facilities (Museum Practice 1996a: 72-74; 1996b: 42-43; 1996c: 53-56; 1996d: 85-87; 1996e: 44-47). *Museum Practice* revisited the topic of reserve collections in 2001 and 2002, with articles discussing open storage and other innovative ways of providing access to reserve collections (see for example, Martin 2001: 7; Pes 2002: 50-52; Museum Practice 2001: 71-72; 2002: 65). Although the articles provided interesting case studies, they did not offer a comprehensive or extensive comparative view of how museums in a particular region grappled with the problem of how to best utilise stored collections.

In addition to these reports from the museums' perspective, other studies have examined how visitors perceive stored collections, notably the 1996 study for the Field Museum, Chicago, by Eric Gyllenhaal, *Visitor Understandings about Research, Collections and Behind-the-Scenes at the Field Museum*, and Lynda Kelly's 1999 Australian conference paper *Developing access to collections through assessing user needs* (Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: paras. 1-47; Kelly 1999: 1-10). In the Field Museum study, visitors were asked about their perceptions of collection sizes and how objects are used behind-the-scenes. These surveys revealed that most visitors underestimated the size of collections, overestimated the percentage of objects on display, and were largely unaware of the research function of museums (Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: para. 1). Kelly similarly questioned how much the public knew about stored collections and whether they wanted to learn more. She concluded that although the public may 'not have a clue' about stored collections, they are nevertheless 'interested to find out more about behind-the-scenes functions, as well as specific information about the objects and specimens held in the collections' (Kelly 1999: 1-10). The surveys for this present article were based on those for the pre-

vious studies, so that findings could be compared and contrasted. The results differed to a surprising extent.

Research Questions

The earlier studies, as well as the trends in museum practice reviewed above, gave rise to a number of unanswered questions about London's stored collections.

Firstly, how accessible are London's collections? To explore this question, visitor surveys were conducted to gauge public perceptions of stored collections. Another important element of this question was to see if museums have documented their collections in a way that is publicly accessible.

Secondly, do London museum staff feel that their stored collections are used sufficiently? Although several papers call for the increased use of collections, it was unclear whether individual London museums wanted their stored collections to be used more (Wilkinson 2005: 4-7; DCMS 2005: 7; NMDC 2003: 14). Did external pressure, in the form of performance indicators, influence museums' desire to increase the use of stored collections?

Thirdly, what strategies do museums employ to increase use? Does the type of collection (e.g. military, history, art) or classification of museum (e.g. national museum, local authority, independent) affect the success of these strategies?

Fourthly, what factors hinder greater usage of stored objects? Possible obstacles were thought to be public ignorance of stored collections, as found by Eric Gyllenhaal, et al., and the lack of resources, reported in a pilot survey conducted by this researcher (Gyllenhaal, et al. 1996: paras. 1-3; British Museum, Prehistory and Europe response to Survey 1). Further, are there disadvantages associated with the use of stored collections?

Fifthly, what strategies would museums employ if resources were unlimited? This question aimed to unleash the museum professionals' creativity by asking their dream strategies for improving collections usage.

The overarching question in this investigation was, how often, and in what ways, are London's stored collections used? The study explored the question from the perspectives of both the museums and external users.

The Stored Collections: Survey 1

Methodology

The Stored Collections Survey is shown in Appendix 1, Stored Collections Survey. It examined collection use from the museum professional's perspective. As there seemed to be an absence of statistics relating to stored collection use in the public realm, the researcher devised a survey which was circulated to a sample of London museums. The 13-question survey attempted to gauge the level of use of stored collections, as well as the priority that staff gave to increasing the use of stored objects (Survey 1).

Of the 55 London museums which were approached, 28 returned usable surveys. The respondents, listed in Table 1.1, Survey 1, included eleven NMGs, five Local Authority museums, ten independent museums and two university museums.

Results

Quantifying the Use of Stored Collections (Survey 1: Qs 1, 2, 3 and 6; Table 1.1)

Appendix 1, Table 1.1 presents a summary of the data collected in response to questions on the number of stored objects, whether museums recorded the number of stored objects used, the number of stored objects used per month and whether respondents were satisfied with the amount objects are used. Analysing the data proved more difficult than the researcher anticipated.

Issues Encountered in Measuring Usage

Several museums found difficulty in reporting the number of their stored objects. Some museums hold unregistered bulk archaeological material, which could potentially be counted in the total number; for instance, the British Museum's Department of Prehistory and Europe holds 3m stored objects when bulk material is included, but only 250 000 objects when it is excluded (British Museum, Prehistory and Europe response to Survey 1). Incomplete registration of material also makes calculations difficult. These findings suggest that one obstacle facing museums is lack of knowledge about what is held in their stores.

Since several museums recorded less than 12 objects moved out of storage per year, the responses as reported have been edited to reflect the number of objects used per year. Some responses may not be accurate and should be taken as a minimum. For example, the number of stored objects used at the British Museum's Department of Prehistory and Europe is not centrally recorded, but this number was estimated by adding together the average number of objects accessed per month for photography, loans and research at the two outstation stores and departmental study room, and then multiplying by 12 (British Museum, Prehistory and Europe response to Survey 1).

Some respondents gave non-numerical answers that the researcher translated into numbers. The British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings responded that hundreds of stored objects were used per week; the researcher took 200 as the probable minimum number accessed per week and multiplied this number by 52 (British Museum, Prints and Drawings response to Survey 1). The National Army Museum reported that there were 'several object movements every week'; the researcher took two as the minimum number of movements and multiplied by 52 (National Army Museum response to Survey 1). Although by no means statistically reliable, these calculations give an idea of the vast variation in use, from a declared 19 506 in the British Museum, Prehistory and Europe, to ten, five, two or none in some small museums.

Another problem with the results for Question 3 is that responses did not always give the number of objects used for research. The Royal Academy's Works on Paper Department only reported the number of stored objects displayed or loaned, as it does not

record other uses (Royal Academy, Works on Paper response to Survey 1). This may be the case with other museums, so the numbers should be taken as a minimum.

Record-Keeping and Stored Collection Usage (Survey 1: Q 2; Table 1.1)
Several respondents do not keep records of how many stored objects are used per year: 12 record the amount of use, five record a similar statistic, such as the total number of objects loaned, and ten keep no records. The accuracy of these records is uncertain. The Science Museum noted that its records were not kept 'very systematically' (Science Museum response to Survey 1). In all, 15 out of 28 respondents (approximately 54%) do not specifically record how many stored objects are used. The fact that five museums record similar statistics such as loans or number of objects used for research may indicate that museums prefer recording types of service performed rather than what types of objects are used. In order to gain a more accurate picture of usage, it is probably necessary to standardise methods of assessing stored object use; as Keene suggests, 'more research is needed to compile statistics on usage and to understand the conditions for success' (Keene 2005: 59).

Despite these issues, the Stored Collections Survey generated some interesting findings. Unsurprisingly, of the ten respondents reporting more than 1000 stored objects used per year, eight are National Museums and Galleries (NMGs). NMGs presumably have more resources to cater for researchers, loan objects and support other access-oriented activities. Keene notes the high cost of providing work spaces for researchers; perhaps other museums lack the funds to equip stores with these facilities (Keene 2005: 51-54). NMGs may also attract more researchers given the importance and reputation of their collections. The noticeably high usage of the British Museum's Prints and Drawings Department may be accounted for by the nature of the collection. As explained by the Collections Manager of another prints collection, works on paper are delicate and cannot be displayed for long periods of time; therefore, the majority of the collection is held in storage and used intensively by researchers or in short-term exhibitions (Interview 10).

Five museums, namely Firepower!, the Hampstead Museum, the Foundling Museum, Leighton House Museum, and Dr. Johnson's House reported ten or fewer stored objects used per year. For the latter three, low usage can be partly explained by the collections' specialist nature or stored collections' lack of relevance to the main collection (Leighton House Museum response to Survey 1; Dr. Johnson's House response to Survey 1; Interview 5). Moreover, Dr. Johnson's House and the Leighton House Museum are historic houses whose appeal may lie in their historic interiors rather than in stored objects.

19 respondents stated that they would like their stored collections used more, though 12 qualified this statement by saying that the current level of usage was appropriate given constraints on resources (Fig. 1). Interestingly, even though the Theatre Museum had the second highest number of stored objects used per year, staff would nonetheless like their stored collections used more (Theatre Museum response to Survey 1). Claire Hudson, Head of Collections at the Theatre Museum, explained that the Theatre

Museum holds the premier collection of performing arts artefacts in the UK, and accordingly it should be used to a greater extent (Interview 14). Only one respondent, the Foundling Museum, explicitly said that that the level of use was appropriate; this is probably because the stored collection is small and consists of items of secondary interest (Interview 5).

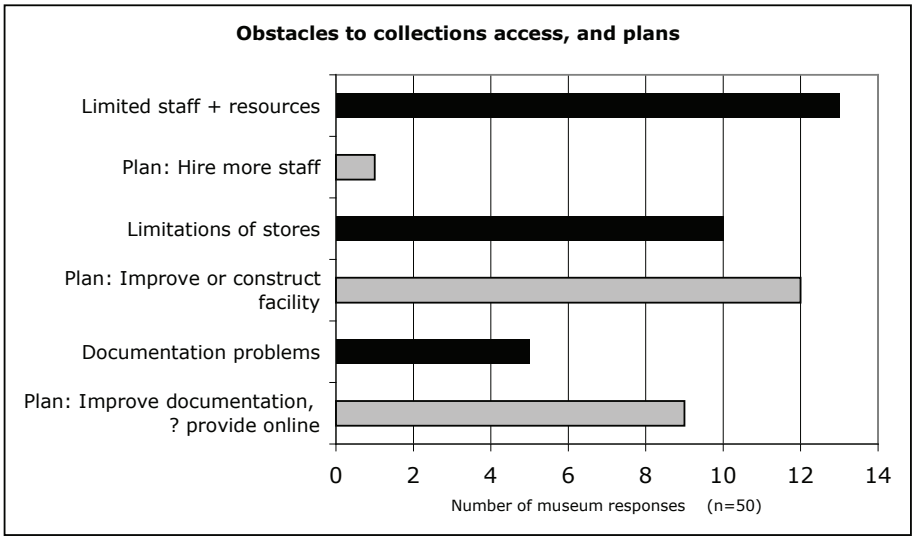

Figure 1. Replies to Survey 1, Q6: "Would you like the stored collections to be more accessed / used, or do you feel the current level of use is appropriate?" (unclear responses unreported).

A survey question such as Question 6 is probably not the best way to assess the level of satisfaction with the use of stored objects. The use of stored collections is a complicated issue which is not easily quantifiable, and should probably be assessed in a more comprehensive manner. Richer, more detailed information could be obtained by conducting face-to-face interviews with staff; however, time constraints prohibited the researcher from conducting interviews with a sample of this size.

Recording Visitor Statistics (Survey 1: Q4; Appendix 1, Tables 1.1 and 1.2)
18 respondents recorded the number of visitors who use the stored collections, three recorded a similar statistic, and seven did not record the number of visitors using stored objects. More respondents (18) recorded the number of visitors than the number of stored objects used (12). This may indicate that museums are more interested in recording the number of individuals who have been provided with a service than the number of objects used.

Visitor Usage of Stored Collections (Survey 1: Q4; Appendix 1, Table 1.2)
Six of the eight respondents reporting the highest number of visitors represented NMGs. This may be due to the noted reputations of the NMGs collections and the ability of national museums to provide facilities for researchers. The British Museum's Prints and Drawings Department may have the highest recorded number of users, due to the nature of its collection, as discussed above. London's Transport Museum and the Science Museum reported a staggering number of visitors, many of which formed part of tours and open weekends attracting thousands of visitors per year (London's Transport Museum response to Survey 1; Science Museum response to Survey 1; see also Caesar 2006, this volume).

Respondents with the lowest number of visitors were Local Authority museums (Hampstead Museum, Wandsworth Museum), specialist museums (Firepower!, Foundling Museum) and historic houses (Leighton House Museum).

Performance Indicators and Stored Collection Use (Survey 1: Q5; Appendix 1, Table 1.3)
Ten respondents, representing seven museums, reported the use of stored collections or a similar statistic to an external institution as a performance indicator. Five respondents, representing three NMGs, report the usage of stored collections or number of items loaned to DCMS as a performance indicator. Two other respondents reported the use of stored collections to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The relatively low number of respondents reporting this performance indicator suggests that the desire to increase use of stored collections is not motivated by pressure from external organisations. On the other hand, this finding may indicate that museums, professional bodies and government departments may be less concerned with use of stored collections than the researcher assumed. For example, in response to Question 5, the British Optical Association Museum respondent wrote, 'We considered very carefully what our P.I.s should be. This never entered the equation' (British Optical Association Museum response to Survey 1).

Obstacles to Increased Usage (Survey 1: Q7; Appendix 1, Table 1.4)
The most commonly cited obstacles were lack of staff and resources, physical limitations of stores, documentation problems and lack of money. Museums may be hesitant to allocate money to hire staff and improve storage facilities if stored collections are a low priority. As noted in a 1996 edition of *Museum Practice*, 'providing direct public access to stored collections is still a relatively low priority compared, for example, with improving access to stores for staff-or making existing public areas of museums and galleries accessible to people with disabilities' (Museum Practice 1996b: 42). A respondent from the British Museum's Prehistory and Europe Department recalled how the Museum once had visible storage near the Greek and Roman galleries. When pressure on resources led to a reduction in warding staff, the visible storage section was closed so that staff could invigilate the interpreted galleries (British Museum, Prehistory and Europe response to Survey 1). Closing visible storage so that interpreted galleries could remain open may have conferred more benefits on visitors; a *Museum Practice* article suggested that 'the absence of labelling for stored collections . . . can

limit the value of direct access with people without specialist knowledge' (Museum Practice 1996b: 42).

Various physical limitations of the stores were also named as obstacles to increased usage. For the Theatre Museum, the awkward location of the Blythe House store in West London, the complicated security procedures and shortage of space for visitors negatively impact the degree to which objects are used (Theatre Museum response to Survey 1). The Museum of London's LAARC similarly reported that the number of workstations for researchers limited the number of researchers that could be accommodated (LAARC response to Survey 1). A National Army Museum respondent reported another problematic situation: 'the lack of facilities to study them [material] once removed from store' (National Army Museum response to Survey 1).

Ways of Accessing Objects (Survey 1: Q8; Appendix 1, Table 1.5)
Another survey question aimed to assess the level of direct access visitors have to stored objects. No respondents offer visitors an open store which they can visit at any time. The NMGs had the most number of respondents offering store tours. Analysed by collection type, scientific/industrial /transportation collections can be seen as offering the most extensive access to stored objects: London's Transport Museum is the only respondent with an open storage facility. As for other access, many respondents (22) offer access to the stores by appointment.

The value of open storage has been questioned. Voicing a personal opinion not representing the views of the Museum of London, Collections Care Officer Andy Holbrook questioned if store tours which were not carefully developed in conjunction with education staff were in danger of becoming 'theme park rides' where visitors feel the thrill of seeing 'behind-the-scenes' but do not engage with the objects (Interview 8). Other disadvantages include potential harm to objects, high numbers of staff needed to supervise collections, hazards to visitors and lack of visitor understanding due to insufficient interpretation (Museum Practice 1996b: 42).

These caveats are not borne out by more recent research, which shows that open storage does make stored collections accessible to the public in certain ways. Tony Spence, the British Museum's Storage Project Manager, thinks stores with occasional public access can fulfil a duty by providing access to large numbers of objects (Interview 2). Store tours can be popular, as evidenced by the large demand for tours at the Science Museum's stores (Keene 2005: 125; and Caesar, this volume). Moreover, not all store tours give superficial access to objects: the British Museum provides tours of the visible storage in the Ceramic Study Centre for specialists (British Museum, Prehistory and Europe response to Survey 1). Lucy Caesar, elsewhere in this volume, has found great enthusiasm for store tours among the public, even of problematic collections such as science and industry, and particular appreciation for the information that visitors gain from these experiences.

How Stored Objects are Used (Survey 1: Q9; Appendix 1, Table 1.6)
Analysed by activity, stored collections are used most intensely for display: seven respondents reported high usage of stored objects in display, ten respondents reported medium usage in display, and seven reported low usage. No patterns emerge when display is analysed by size or type of collection.

The next most intensive use was research by staff, with seven respondents listing it as high, eight as medium, and four as low. Research by external visitors is the next most frequent activity, with six respondents listing usage as high, eight as medium and nine as low. History and art museums reported the highest amount of research by staff and visitors; this coincides with Keene's observation that art collections are 'intensively used by researchers' (Keene 2005: 57). Scientific/industrial/transportation collections reported the least amount of usage for research by staff and visitors. This agrees with the statement that 'industry, technology and agricultural collections are less used for research' due to limited academic activity in these areas (Keene 2005: 58).

Stored objects are used less often for loans than for research or display. Five respondents reported high use for loans, eight reported medium, and 12 reported low. NMGs appear to be the most active in loaning stored objects; of the five respondents reporting high usage of stored objects for loans, four were NMGs. Analysed by collection type, art and history collections loaned stored objects most frequently.

Stored collections are used to a lesser extent in handling collections; only one respondent cited use in handling collections as high, six cited it as medium, and 15 listed it as low. History collections lead the way in this activity.

Several respondents listed photography as a use for stored collections: two reported high usage, one reported medium and one reported low usage.

Art collections have the most intensive usage, except (understandably) as handling collections. At the other end of the spectrum, the Science Museum and the Imperial War Museum reported that their usage for all activities was low.

Digitisation and Stored Collections (Survey 1, Q10; Appendix 1, Table 1.7)
Art collections have gone furthest towards making collections publicly available: all five of those respondents have part or all of their collection digitised. This corresponds with Keene's observation: 'Art museums have been among the first to fully exploit the internet and are still in the lead in making their whole collection available online' (Keene 2005: 142).

All NMGs except for the Museum of Childhood have part of their stored collections available online. The NMGs' greater resources and duty to promote access to national collections may account for this circumstance. No local authority museums who responded to the survey in 2005 had digitised their collections; however, the Cuming Museum planned to produce a 'pilot batch' by December 2005 (Cuming Museum response to Survey 1).

All respondents which have over 1000 objects used per year have part of their collections digitised, except for the Cuming Museum which is in a pilot stage (Tables 1.1 and 1.7; Cuming Museum response to Survey 1). This may suggest a relationship between publicly available documentation and increased use.

Finding Aids (Survey 1: Q11; Appendix 1, Table 1.7)
Visitors use a wide variety of finding aids, including externally-produced websites, catalogues and books. Despite the number of respondents having documentation online, the most frequently cited method of identifying objects to study is telephone or written enquiries. A large number of museum respondents (23) also reported enquiries to staff during visits. The researcher wondered whether online documentation reduced the demands on staff time, but apparently this is not the case. However, improved documentation may speed how quickly staff answer enquiries (See also Lejeune, this volume).

Future Developments for Stored Collections (Survey 1: Q7, Q12; Appendix 1, Tables 1.8, 1.9)
The survey contained optional questions about the development of stored collections. Figure 2 juxtaposes the obstacles to increased use against plans for development. Only the respondents who listed plans for development and named physical limits of stores, lack of staff and documentation problems as obstacles are included.

14 respondents who chose to answer this optional question (and 17 respondents to the survey in total) cited lack of staff as an obstacle to increased usage of stored objects, yet only one respondent reported plans to hire more staff (Table 1.8). Keene notes the failure of some museums to hire additional staff, even when existing staff must spend more time engaged in public access; when the Darwin Centre opened, no additional staff were hired despite the increased demands on staff time (Interview 12). This may well reflect the availability of grants for capital projects at a time when assured income is shrinking.

With the exception of hiring staff, many respondents do seem to be addressing the obstacles preventing increased use of stored collections. Of the 12 respondents listing physical limits of stores as an obstacle, six knew of plans to improve stores or study facilities. Four out of seven respondents that cited documentation problems as an obstacle have plans to improve documentation.

Top Dreams for London's Stored Collections (Survey 1: Q13; Appendix 1, Tables 1.8 and 1.9)
The final question in Survey 1 asked the respondents how they would increase stored collection use given unlimited resources. With this question, the researcher hoped to ascertain what museums thought would entice the public to use their stored collections. The most frequently cited dream plans were improvements to stores or new facilities (8), various outreach activities (8), improvements to displays (5) and fully digitised collections available online (5). No respondent mentioned hiring staff when describing their top dream for stored collections. Perhaps the presence of additional staff was

implicit in the plans described by respondents, or perhaps they simply considered it an unrealistic dream. Although some UK museums are reluctant to dispose of objects, one respondent's dream was to rationalise the museum's collection (Wilkinson 2005: 23-24; Table 1.9).

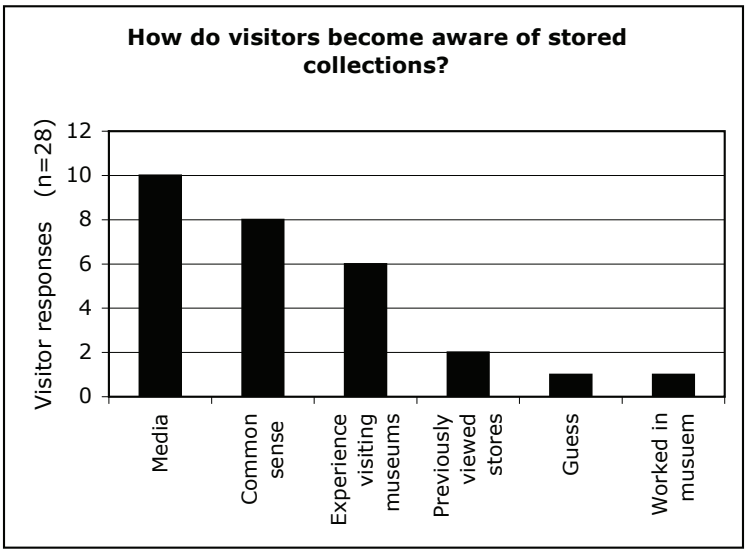

Figure 2. Replies to Survey 1: Q7: "If you would like to see more use of the stored collections, what is the main obstacle? and Q11: Do you have any comments in general on your museum's use of stored objects or collections, including plans for development?" (more than one response was possible).

General Findings on Museum Perspectives

The key findings from the stored collection survey were that many museums do not keep specific records of how often stored objects are used, and that a majority of respondents would like their collections used more, but that obstacles such as lack of staff, documentation problems and physical limitations of stores prevent the increased use of stored collections. The surprising finding that the most frequently cited obstacle, lack of staff resources, was not addressed in plans may well arise from the availability of grants for capital funding from the National Lottery and sometimes from regional development funding, at a time when grant-in-aid for normal running and operational costs is at best at a standstill.

Survey 1 investigated the uses of stored collections from the museums' viewpoint. But how do visitors perceive the objects held behind closed doors? In the next section, the findings from the visitor perception survey clash with some commonly-held views about visitors' ignorance of stored collections.

Visitor Perceptions: Survey 2

The Visitor Perception Survey, referred to as Survey 2, aimed to compare visitor knowledge of stored collections in London with findings from a study from Chicago's Field Museum (Gyllenhaal, et al. 1996: paras. 1-46). The Field Museum study found that for the most part, visitors did not understand that museum collections were much larger than the amount that was displayed. In addition, visitors believed that objects were used behind-the-scenes for exhibition-related activities rather than research (Gyllenhaal, et al. 1996: paras. 1-3). Kelly similarly argued that visitors do not know much about stored collections but are interested in learning more about them (Kelly 1999: 9). The present study, although conducted roughly a decade after the Field Museum and in a different country, aimed to determine how much visitors know about stored collections and whether they want more information about them.

Methodology

Museum visitors were approached and asked six questions (modelled on the Field Museum survey) outside five museums: the British Museum, the Foundling Museum, the Geffrye Museum, the Museum of London and the Theatre Museum (abbreviated as BM, FM, GM, MoL, and ThM in the results; Survey 2). After reviewing the results, five additional visitors to each museum were asked two additional questions: if they thought museums displayed all objects, and how visitors discovered the existence of stores. Since the Geffrye Museum did not grant permission for the additional questions to be asked, these results are incomplete. The final eight-question survey was conducted additionally on visitors to Tate Britain and the Imperial War Museum (IWM) (five visitors to each).

Adult visitors without children were asked these questions in July and August 2005. An effort was made to interview the same number of exiting and entering visitors at each location to determine if visitors were better informed after their visits. However, since visiting the museum made no perceivable difference in responses, no distinction is made in the results between entering and exiting visitors.

Results

Visitor Awareness of Stored Collections (Survey 2: Q1, Q2; Tables 2.1 and 2.2)

Are all objects displayed?		
Yes	No	Number of respondents
2	28	30

Table 2.1. Survey 2: Perception of objects

When asked whether museums displayed all of their objects, the majority of visitors knew that museums tended to keep many objects in storage, contradicting assumptions that visitors are ignorant of the existence of stored collections (Kelly 1999: 1-10; Jaoul 1995: 4). Only two visitors out of 28 stated that they thought museums displayed all of their objects. Visitors were also asked how they came to realise that museums stored

most of the objects, and the largest number (10) indicated that they had learned about stored collections from the media (Survey 2, Table 2.2). Six visitors knew about stored collections from visiting other museums.

How did you become aware that museums store objects?

Common sense	8
Media	10
Worked in museum	1
Guess	1
Experience visiting museums	6
Viewed stores	2
Number of respondents	28

Table 2.2. Survey 2: Awareness of stored collections.

Of these, one had learned of stored collections from speaking with a Science Museum curator (FM visitor response to Survey 2). One visitor to the Foundling Museum had glimpsed the storage area for the Gerald Coke Handel Collection, which is visible from the top floor gallery (FM visitor response to Survey 2). The layout of this Foundling Museum gallery suggests another way that museums can make their stored objects more accessible. Instead of providing costly full-fledged visible storage, museums can construct their spaces so that visitors catch glimpses of objects in storage.

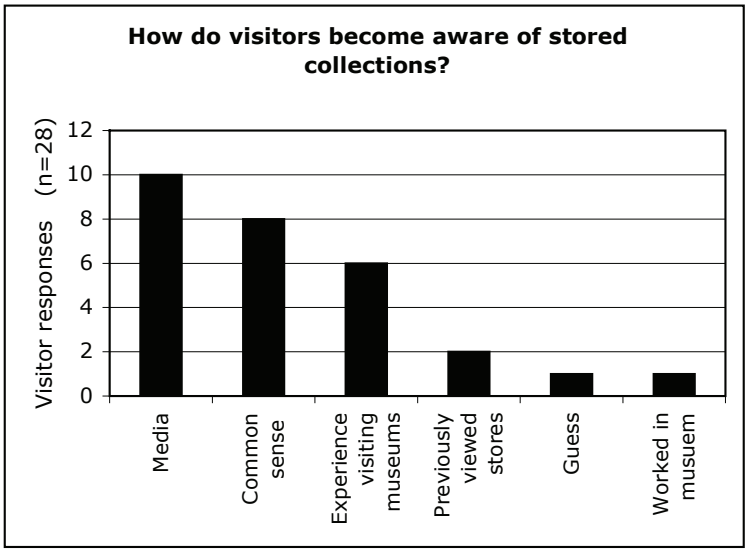

Figure 3. Responses to Survey 2: Q2: "How did you become aware of the fact that museums tend to store some objects?"

Visitors' Perceptions of Collection Size (Survey 2: Q4; Table 2.3)
Survey 2, Table 2.3 compares visitors' perceptions of collection sizes and percentages displayed with the actual sizes and percentages displayed. All of the museums in this survey, except for the Geffrye Museum and the Imperial War Museum, provided the researcher with approximate figures of total number of objects and the percentage on display.

Museum	Actual size (estimated)	Summary of perception of size	Actual % displayed	Summary of perception of % displayed
BM	3m; 4.5-6m incl. bulk archaeological material	all underestimated; closest answer 1m	0.50%	all overestimated; closest answer 5%
FM	1000	1 accurate at 1000, 1 overestimated and 1 underestimated, 2 did not answer	70-80%	all underestimated; closest answer 80%
MoL	1.1m	all underestimated; closest answer 20 000	5-10%	all overestimated; closest answer 10-20%
Tate	75 000	all underestimated; closest answer 5000	10%	all overestimated; closest answer 25%
ThM	1.1m	all underestimated; closest answer 5000	7%	all overestimated; closest answer 20%

Total number of respondents 35

Table 2.3. Survey 2: Perception of collection size and percentage displayed.

Only one visitor gave an accurate estimate of the number of objects in a collection: a Foundling Museum visitor responded that the museum held 1000 items. As in the Field Museum study, most visitors tended to underestimate collection sizes by large amounts (Table 2.3; Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: para. 40). As was also the case in the Field Museum study, most visitors overestimated the percentage of objects on display (Table 2.3; Gyllenhaal et al. 1996, para. 40). The exception was visitors to the Foundling Museum, where all visitors underestimated the percentage of collections on display and one visitor overestimated the size of the collection. The Foundling Museum is a special case with only a small number of objects in its store (Interview 5). Perhaps the visitors' awareness of large stored collections caused them to underestimate the proportion of objects on display in the Foundling Museum.

Knowledge of Access Procedures (Survey 2: Q5; Table 2.4)
Of 35 visitors 23 (66%) knew that they could access stored objects by contacting museum staff (Table 2.4). Two visitors thought that individuals must have special credentials to access stored objects (ThM visitor response to Survey 2; GM visitor response to Survey 2). One visitor to the Geffrye Museum assumed it was impossible to see their stored collections (GM visitor response to Survey 2).

Interest in More Information (Survey 2: Q6; Table 2.4)
Interestingly, nine of 35 visitors (approximately 26%) said that in their opinion it was not necessary to provide the public with more information on access to stored collections. It is somewhat surprising that over a quarter of the sample were not interested in more information; however, this finding coincides with a finding from the Field Museum study that many visitors are not interested in what happens behind-the-scenes (Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: paras. 45-46). Of the 26 visitors who did want more information on access, two said that museums have a duty to inform visitors since museums are supported by taxpayers' money (GM visitor response to Survey 2; FM visitor response to Survey 2).

	Do you know how to access?		**Should more effort be made to inform visitors of access?**	
Museum	Yes	No	Yes	No
BM	1	4	3	2
FM	5	0	3	2
GM	4	1	4	1
IWM	3	2	5	0
MoL	2	3	4	1
Tate	3	2	5	0
ThM	5	0	2	3
All	23	12	26	9

Table 2.4. Survey 2: Knowledge of Access Procedures and Interest in More Information.

Why Objects are Stored (Survey 2: Q7; Table 2.5)
Visitors were asked to share their thoughts as to why objects were stored. The three most frequently stated reasons why objects are stored were lack of space (19), conservation reasons (12) and lack of interest (7). Similarly, the Field Museum study found that most visitors thought lack of exhibition space was the reason why objects are stored (Gyllenhaal, et al.1996: para. 46). Conservation and lack of interest were also listed as reasons by several Field Museum visitors (Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: paras. 40-41). In this present survey, 23 visitors gave reasons relating to the display of objects. This coincides with the Field Museum study conclusion that visitors perceive the museum as exhibition-focused rather than research-oriented (Gyllenhaal, et al. 1996: para. 40).

Display	Lack of space	19
	Lack of money to display	1
	Rotate displays	3
	Total display-related reasons	23
Object care	Conservation reasons	12
	Fragility	5
	Total object-related reasons	17
Interest	Lack of interest/relevance	7
	Duplicates	5
	Total interest-related reasons	12
Security	Too valuable	1
	Other security reasons	4
	Total security-related reasons	5
Loans	Loans	1
	Total number of respondents	35

Table 2.5. Survey 2: Reasons why objects are in store.

How Stored Objects are Used (Survey 2: Q8; Fig. 4)
Another question asked visitors how stored objects were used. Research was the top use cited. This finding suggests that London museum visitors are better informed about the usage of stored collections than were visitors in the Field Museum study, in which few visitors realized the role of research in the museum (Gyllenhaal, et al. 1996: para. 46). However, nine of 35 visitors (26%), the second most common response, believed that objects not displayed were unused, which reflects a persistent lack of knowledge about stored collections among some people (Fig. 4).

	Frequencies
Research	20
Not used	9
Loans	6
Decoration in offices	3

Displayed later	3
Conserved	2
Kept as historical record	2
Used in special exhibit	2
Catalogued	1
Teaching	1
Total number of respondents=35	

Figure 4. Survey 2, Q8: How do you think stored objects are used? (More than one response was possible)

General Findings From the Visitor Perception Survey

Similar to the findings from the Field Museum study, this survey found that the majority of visitors overestimated the percentage of objects on display and underestimated the number of objects in the museums' collections (Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: paras. 1-3). However, contrary to the findings of Kelly and Gyllenhaal et al., this study found that visitors were well-informed about the existence and uses of stored collections (Kelly 1999: 9; Gyllenhaal et al. 1996: paras. 1-3).

Discussion

The Stored Collections Survey and the Visitor Perception Survey indicate that museums use their stored collections in a variety of interesting ways, that many museum respondents would ideally like them used more, and that visitors to London museums are aware of the existence and purpose of stored collections (Survey 1, Tables 1.1, 1.5, 1.6; Survey 2, Tables 2.1, 2.2). Returning to the questions which initially guided this article, how can the assumptions behind them now be evaluated?

The first question asked, how easy is it to access London's stored collections? From the museums' perspectives, how is information about their stored collections provided? Over half of the museums respondents (18) have a digitised catalogue of their collections available online to the public, and four more are developing similar resources. The survey revealed that in London, art museums and the NMGs were leading the way in digitising their collections (Survey 1, Table 1.7). The British Museum aimed to put the internal collections database online within ten years and planed to arrange it so that searches on Google® produce the entry in the top three results (Interview 2). These developments signal a commitment to facilitate public access to stored collections, which is timely given Keene's prediction that 'pressure on museums to make their collections inventory accessible on the web will increase' (Keene 2005: 154).

The second question asked if museums would like their collections used more. This question wrongly assumed that museums knew the amount of use of their stored collections; the results for Survey 1 reveal that several museums do not keep specific records of use. Nevertheless, a majority of the respondents (19) indicated that they would like use of their collections to increase (Survey 1, Table 1.1; Fig. 1). Staff at the British Museum and the Royal Academy felt that it was museums' public duty to provide as

much public access as possible to the stored collections (Interview 2; Interview 9). But despite their wish to increase usage, 12 respondents felt that this was not possible, due to pressure on resources (Survey 1, Table 1.1). This begs a different question: are London's museums promoting use or just coping passively with demand?

Another question asked what strategies are used to increase the use of stored collections. The assumption underlying this question, that most museums are pro-actively seeking to increase their collection usage, is called into question for the reasons discussed above. Instead, information was gained on the ways in which stored collections are most frequently used and which types of collections are suitable for such activities. Art collections are used intensely for all activities except for handling, which may damage the objects. Scientific/industrial/transport stored collections experience no or low usage for all activities except for loans, vehicle events and displays by London's Transport Museum (Survey 1, Table 1.6). Yet this category offers popular store tours and open weekends, which London's Transport Museum describes as 'always a success' (Survey 1, Table 1.5; London's Transport Museum response to Survey 1). The doubts about the effectiveness of open storage are discussed in the results section for Survey 1, but open and visible storage have been found in the past to 'increase public support because visitors gain a better understanding of the museums' responsibilities, resources, and true social utility' (Thistle 1990: 51). Recent surveys of participants in the Science Museum's Store Tours showed considerable enthusiasm for them (Caesar, this volume).

Possible strategies for developing collections use can be informed by looking at how stores are equipped to facilitate this (Survey 1, Q8). In the British Museum's Ceramic Study Centre, researchers work at tables surrounded by ceramic objects in visible storage (Fig 5; Interview 3). The British Museum's Icon store also features workstations for internal and external researchers within the store (Fig 6; Ibid). Museums can fa-

Figure 5. The British Museum's Ceramic Study Centre Image: British Museum. We are very grateful to the British Museum for providing the images in Figs 5 and 6.

cilitate research by providing computer terminals or laptops with access to collections databases in stores (Interview 3; Interview 8; Interview 9; Interview 11). Some stores, such as the MoL's LAARC, London's Transport Museum Depot and the British Museum's textile store among others, feature large spaces in which events can be held with members of the public (Fig 7; Interview 4; Interview 6; Interview 7). Some stores, such as those in the British Museum and the Royal Academy, improve storage (Interview 2). One proposed project will renovate the British Museum's boat pound, an area currently inaccessible to the public where historic wooden boats are stored. The improvements will allow researchers permanent access to these objects when accompanied by most museum personnel, not just curators. The boats could be housed individually in boxes with Perspex side panels to allow viewing and retractable lids to facilitate access by scholars (Interview 3).

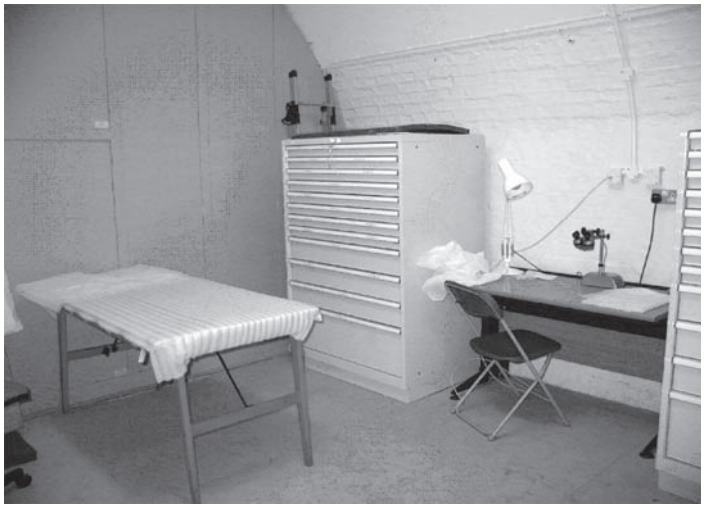

Figure 6. A workstation in the British Museum's Icon Store Image: British Museum.

The fourth question asked, what obstacles prevent the increased use of stored collections? Survey 2 suggested that lack of use is not attributable to public ignorance of the existence of stored collections (Fig. 4; Survey 2, Table 2.1). Instead, lack of staff and resources, physical problems with stores and documentation problems were given as the top three obstacles by museums (Fig. 2; Survey 1, Table 1.4). Surprisingly, only one respondent knew of plans to increase staff numbers (Survey 1, Table 1.8). Staff salaries can comprise as much as 75% of a museum's annual budget (Seminar: Shadla-Hall 2004). The Heritage Lottery Fund will contribute to capital projects, but not significantly to funding to maintain or improve operations. Consequently, museums are generally more willing to embark on new building projects than to invest in additional staff.

The secondary question, what disadvantages occur with increased use, bears investigating. If developments are not well planned, scarce funds could be spent on facilities that are not beneficial to visitors. One respondent asked, 'Is not the best use of an object

always in an interpretive space (i.e. a gallery)?' (Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House response to Survey 1). The Glenbow Museum's visible storage experiment provides examples of problems associated with some types of visible storage. Visitors did not engage meaningfully with objects, objects were damaged by the movement of the semi-display drawers, and researchers were hampered by the design of the facility and the presence of visitors (Slater 1995: 13-17).

The final research question asked respondents to share their top dreams for stored collections. While improved storage facilities, documentation and displays were mentioned frequently, outreach activities were also named by a number of those surveyed (Survey 1, Table 1.9). It is interesting that outreach activities were mentioned as frequently as were physical improvements to stores (ibid). This may indicate that museum professionals are strongly motivated to encouraging public engagement with collections. Tony Spence, Storage Project Manager at the British Museum, named object handling and research the two activities that most effectively use stored collections. Handling collections allow visitors to experience an immediate link with the past, whilst research published by staff or visitors brings information about stored objects into the public domain (Interview 2). An increase in these activities, which provide the public with a meaningful connection with museum objects, could help to justify the future maintenance of stored collections.

Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to show how stored objects are used, how much they are used, and what the public knows about them. Lynda Kelly asserts that museums should not ask if 'the public want greater access to our collections: the research shows that they don't know much about this' (Kelly 1999: 9). However, the sample of museum visitors in the Visitor Perception Survey were revealed to be relatively well-informed. 28 of 30 visitors knew that stored collections existed, and 23 of 35 knew how to access them (Survey 2, Tables 2.1 and 2.4). It could be argued, therefore, that the opinions of this relatively well-informed public should be taken into account.

The question remains: what does the public want? According to Holbrook, 'it is worth noting that, to my knowledge, no contemporary audience development work has been undertaken by MoL to discover the public's views on stored collections. So, in truth, we are not entirely clear about what we should be offering' (Interview 9). As noted recently by Javier Pes, 'visitor evaluation of open stores has just begun', with the Science Museum leading the way in evaluating their store tours (Pes 2002: 52; Caesar, this volume). Visitor input can be seen as essential to the 'democratization' of museums, i.e. the mission to 'open all of the museum's resources to the public', as described by Paul Thistle (Thistle 1990: 49). If museums are serious about this goal, the next step should be to ask visitors their top dreams for using stored collections.

Visitors' wishes in regard to stored collections would have to be balanced against the interests and resources of museums. Kelly ponders whether museum professionals would hesitate to let the public have greater contact with stored objects: 'are we in museums ready and willing to provide greater access to our collections for the purposes of

public access and learning?' (Kelly 1999: 9). However, the Stored Collections Survey indicated that a lack of proper facilities, funding and staff, rather than professional reluctance, were primarily to blame for obstructing increased use of stored collections (Survey 1, Table 1.4). Indeed, a majority of museum professionals stated their wish to have their collections used more (Survey 1, Table 1.1). Perhaps the question is not whether museums are 'ready and willing', but rather 'ready, willing and able' to provide for the increased use of collections. Unless this is made a priority by professional bodies and government agencies, and resources are provided, any increased use or further progress may remain elusive.

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Abbreviations

DCMS Department for Culture, Media and Sport
LAARC London Archaeological Archive Resource Centre
MA UK Museums Association
MLA Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
NMDC National Museum Directors' Conference
NMGs National Museums and Galleries
RCMG Research Centre for Museums & Galleries

Interviews

Interview 1: British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan. Darrel Day, Senior Museum Assistant. 27 July 2005.
Interview 2: British Museum, Directorate. Tony Spence, Storage Project Manager. 18 July 2005.
Interview 3: British Museum, Prehistory and Europe. Alan Slade, Assistant Curator. 5 August 2005.
Interview 4: British Museum, Textile Store. Helen Wolfe, Collections Manager. 3 August 2005.
Interview 5: Foundling Museum. Katarina Grant, Curatorial Assistant. 20 July 2005.
Interview 6: London's Transport Museum. David Chan, Museum Trainee. 10 August 2005.
Interview 7: Museum of London, LAARC. Adam Corsini, Curatorial Assistant. 1 August 2005.
Interview 8: Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House. Andy Holbrook, Collections Care Officer. 1 August 2005.
Interview 9: Royal Academy of Arts, Paintings and Sculpture. Rachel Hewitt, Collections Manager. 2 August 2005.
Interview 10: Royal Academy of Arts, Works on Paper. Morgan Feely, Collections Manager. 2 August 2005.
Interview 11: Science Museum. Graham Whealdon, Stores Access Co-ordinator. 11 August 2005.
Interview 12: Institute of Archaeology. Suzanne Keene, Senior Lecturer in Museum and Heritage Studies. 16 August 2005.
Interview 13: Tate Collection. Julian Barnes, Collections Manager, 15 July 2005.

Interview 14: Theatre Museum. Claire Hudson, Head of Information and Collections Management. 3 August 2005.

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Appendix 1

Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey Questionnaire

Survey 1, the Stored Collections Survey, comprised 11 questions and two optional questions.

1. How many items are kept in the Museum's [or department's] store(s)?
2. Does the Museum record how many objects in the store(s) are used for loan, exhibition or other access each month?

___ Yes ___ No

3. Approximately how many objects from the store(s) are used for loan, exhibition or other access each month?_____
4. Does the Museum record the number of visitors who access objects in the store(s), or the number of visits?

___ Yes ___ No

If so, how many visitors or visits per month?

5. Is access to / use of stored collections a performance indicator that has to be reported?

___ Yes ___ No

If so, to which institution?

6. Would you like the stored collections to be more accessed / used, or do you feel the current level of use is appropriate?

Please explain:

7. If you would like to see more use of the stored collections, what is the main obstacle?
8. Does your museum have an open storage facility, which visitors can access? Please tick the category or categories that best describe your department's facilities.

___An open storage facility which visitors can access at any time
___An open storage facility which visitors can access at set times
___Stores tours for the public
___Access to stored objects or collections by appointment
___No access, objects are brought out to visitors

Amount of Use	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**
Research by external visitor			
Research by staff member			
To be put on display			
To be loaned to another institution			
For use in a handling collection or event			
Other reasons (please say what):			

10. Are part or all of your Museum's stored collections listed on an online catalogue or database that is accessible to the public?
___ Yes ___ No
If so, what percentage of the stored collections are listed on the online catalogue or database?
11. Please tick which methods visitors habitually use to identify which objects they wish to see from the store (please tick as many as are applicable).
___A catalogue produced by the Museum
___An externally-produced catalogue
___An online resource or database produced by the Museum
___A telephone enquiry to a member of the Museum's staff
___Enquiry to staff when they visit
Please list any other methods that visitors use to identify objects they wish to see from the store:

Optional Questions
12. Do you have any comments in general on your museum's use of stored objects or collections, including plans for development?

13. What would be your dream for promoting the use of the stored collections given unlimited resources?

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Table 1.1. Survey 1: Total items in store, record-keeping, use of stored objects, and satisfaction with level of stored object use

Respondent	Estimated number of objects in store	Do you record the number of stored objects used?			Stated number of times stored objects used per year	Would like to increase the use of stored collections? **			
		Yes	Similar statistic	No		Yes, unqualified	Yes, but use appropriate given constraints	Current use appropriate given constraints	Current use appropriate
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan	7m excl. archival material	•			1290				
British Museum, Prints and Drawings	3m	•			10 400			•	
British Museum, Prehistory and Europe	3m incl. bulk archaeological material		•		19 506		•		
Theatre Museum	1 099 200		•		14 532	•			
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House	500 000			•	3600			•	
Museum of London, LAARC	500 000	•			300 to 600	•			
National Army Museum	370 000			•	104		•		
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms	148 000		•		5160		•		

London's Transport Museum	125 788		●		n.d.			●	
Petrie Museum	77 000	●			1000		●		
Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society	40 000	●			240		●		
Cuming Museum	30 000	●			1800		●		
Museum of Childhood	25 500	●			360		●		
Anonymous art gallery	21 110		●		n.d.		●		
Royal Academy, Works on Paper	20 000	●			502 to 624		●		
Firepower!	11 890	●			None		●		
Wandsworth Museum	11 000			●	n.d.		●		
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism	10 250			●	12	●			
British Optical Museum	10 000			●	350	●			
Tate Collection	8000	●			2400			●	
Hampstead	5000			●	2		●		
Royal Academy, Paintings and Sculpture	2000	●			250				

Leighton House	2000			•	5	•			
Linley Sambourne House	1000			•	15	•			
Foundling Museum	300			•	5 to 10				•
Dr Johnson's House	100			•	None				
Old Operating Theatre Museum	60-100			•	48				
Science Museum	n.d.*		•		2493	•			

*n.d. = no data returned
** = unclear responses not reported
Source: Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey.

Table 1.2. **Survey 1**: Collection size, visitors per year and record-keeping

Respondent	Estimated number of objects in store	Number of visitors accessing stored objects each year	Records number of visitors accessing stored objects	Records similar statistic	Does not record number of visitors accessing stored objects
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan	7m excl. archival material	922	•		
British Museum, Prints and Drawings	3m	6000	•		
British Museum, Prehistory and Europe	3m incl. bulk archaeological material	396		•	
Theatre Museum	1 099 200	2496	•		
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House	500 000	n.d.			•
Museum of London, LAARC	500 000	n.d.	•		
National Army Museum	370 000	n.d.			•
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms	over 148 000	1440	•		
London's Transport Museum	125 788	3800	•		
Petrie Museum	77 000	over 100	•		
Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society	40 000	12	•		

Cuming Museum	30 000	60	•		
Museum of Childhood	25 500	60	•		
Anonymous art gallery	21 110	n.d.		•	
Royal Academy, Works on Paper	20 000	n.d.			•
Firepower!	11 890	10	•		
Wandsworth Museum	11 000	3 to 4		•	
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism	10 250	12	•		
British Optical Museum	10 000	96			•
Tate Collection	8000	912	•		
Hampstead	5000	12	•		
Royal Academy, Paintings and Sculpture	2000	240	•		
Leighton House	2000	5	•		
Linley Sambourne House	1000	36	•		
Foundling Museum	200-300	n.d.			•
Dr Johnson's House	100	n.d.			•
Old Operating Theatre Museum	60-100	n.d.			•

Science Museum	n.d.*	3600	•		

*n.d. = no data returned
Source: Gardner, L., 2005. Stored Collections Survey.

Access/use of stored objects or a similar performance indicator reported to DCMS	Access/use of stored collections a performance indicator reported to the Heritage Lottery Fund	Access/use of stored collections a performance indicator reported to other institutions
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan	Linley Sambourne House	London's Transport Museum (to MLA)
British Museum, Prehistory and Europe	London's Transport Museum	LAARC (to Museum of London, Early History Department)
British Museum, Prints and Drawings		Petrie Museum (to Institute of Archaeology)
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House		
Theatre Museum (reports to Victoria and Albert Museum, which reports to DCMS)		

Table 1.3, Survey 1: Use of stored collections as a performance indicator

Table 1.4. Survey 1: Obstacles to increased usage

Respondent	Limited staff and resources	Physical limits of stores	Lack of money	Documenta-tion problems	Security reasons	Lack of interest/ not relevant to core collection	Other
Anonymous art gallery	•	•					
Royal Academy, Paintings and Sculpture	•	•					Offsite objects inaccessible
Tate Collection		•					
British Museum, Prints and Drawings	•	•					Fragility of objects
Royal Academy, Works on Paper		•		•			Fragility of objects
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan	•				•		
British Museum, Prehistory & Europe	•		•				
Cuming Museum	•	•		•			Lack of display space
Foundling Museum						•	
Hampstead	•						
Museum of Childhood	•						
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House	•	•	•				
Museum of London, LAARC	•	•					
Petrie Museum	•	•					

Theatre Museum	•			•	•		Hard to access offsite store
Wandsworth Museum				•			
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism	•		•				
Dr Johnson's House						•	Lack of display space
Leighton House				•		•	
Linley Sambourne House				•			
British Optical Museum							Lack of display space
Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society	•			•			
Old Operating Theatre Museum							Dangerous objects
Firepower!			•				
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms	•	•					Difficulty transporting objects stored offsite
National Army Museum		•					
London's Transport Museum	•				•		
Science Museum	•	•					

Source: Stored Collections Survey

Table 1.5. Survey 1: Visitor access to stored collections

Respondent	Open storage facility with access at set times	Store tours for public	Access to stores by appointment	No access, objects brought out to visitors
British Museum, Prints and Drawings				•
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan		•	•	•
British Museum, Prehistory & Europe		•	•	•
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms			•	•
Museum of Childhood			•	•
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House		•	•	
Museum of London, LAARC		•	•	
Science Museum		•	•	•
Tate Collection			•	
Theatre Museum			•	•
Linley Sambourne House			•	
Hampstead			•	
Leighton House			•	
Cuming Museum			•	•
Wandsworth Museum			•	
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism				•
London's Transport Museum	•	•	•	
Petrie Museum			•	

Source: Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey

Table 1.6. Survey 1: Level of object usage by activity and collection type
The results from historic houses are not included because their overall usage was low (Table 1.1).

Key: Usage level (the darker the greater)						
Respondent	Research by external visitor	Research by staff member	Put on display	Loan to another institution	Used in handling collection or event	Other
Anonymous art gallery						
Royal Academy of Art, Paintings and Sculpture						
Tate Collection						
British Museum, Prints and Drawings						Photography
Royal Academy, Works on Paper						Talks/events
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan						
British Museum, Prehistory & Europe						
Cuming Museum						Photography
Hampstead						
Wandsworth Museum						
Museum of Chlidhood						
Foundling Museum						Conservation

Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House						
Museum of London, LAARC						
Petrie Museum						
Theatre Museum						
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism						Talks/events
British Optical Museum						
Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society						Photography Conservation
Old Operating Theatre Museum		n.d.				
Firepower!						
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms						
National Army Museum						
London's Transport Museum						Photography Conservation Events
Science Museum						

n.d. = no data returned
Source: Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey.

Table 1.7. Survey 1: Digitisation and finding aids by collection type

Respondent	Percentage of stored collections available on online resource	How do visitors find stored objects which they wish to access?					
		Museum produced catalogue	Externally-produced catalogue	Online museum resource or database	Telephone or written enquiry	Enquiry to Museum staff while visiting	Other
Anonymous art gallery	about 90	•	•		•	•	
Royal Academy, Paintings and Sculpture	50+		•	•	•	•	
Tate Collection	100			•		•	
British Museum, Prints and Drawings	*	•	•	•	•	•	
Royal Academy, Works on Paper	40+		•	•	•	•	Books
British Museum, Ancient Egypt and Sudan	*	•	•	•	•	•	
British Museum, Prehistory & Europe	less than 1	•	•	•	•	•	Books
Cuming Museum	0				•		
Hampstead	0				•	•	
Wandsworth Museum	0				•	•	
Museum of Childhood	0				•	•	
Foundling Museum	0				•	•	
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House	5 to 10			•	•		

Museum of London, LAARC	*	•		•	•	•	
Petrie Museum	100			•	•		
Theatre Museum	*	•			•	•	External website
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism	0				•	•	
Dr Johnson's House	0				•	•	
Leighton House	0		•		•	•	
Linley Sambourne House	15 (archive only)	•	•		•	•	Word of mouth
British Optical Museum	100	•		•	•	•	
Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society	0				•	•	
Old Operating Theatre Museum	25			•			
Firepower!	0				•	•	
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms	26			•	•	•	Book / temporary exhibit
National Army Museum	10	•			•		
London's Transport Museum	10				•	•	
Science Museum	5	•		•	•	•	Media

* = Respondent possesses online resource, but did not specify the percentage of stored objects documented on resource.
Source: Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey.

Table 1.8. Survey 1: Obstacles to increased usage and plans for development.

Respondent	Obstacle	Plan	Obstacle	Plan	Obstacle	Plan
	Limited staff time and resources	Hire more staff	Physical limitations of stores	Improvements to storage facility or study room / Construction of new facility	Documentation problems	Improved documentation / online documentation
Anonymous art gallery	•	•	•	•		
Royal Academy, Paintings and Sculpture	•		•	•		
Tate Collection			•	•		
British Museum, Prints and Drawings	•		•			•
Royal Academy, Works on Paper			•		•	•
British Museum, Prehistory & Europe	•			•		•
Cuming Museum	•		•	•	•	•
Foundling Museum						•
Hampstead	•					•
Museum of Childhood	•			•		
Museum of London, Mortimer Wheeler House	•		•	•		
Theatre Museum	•				•	•
Wandsworth Museum					•	•
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism	•					

Dr Johnson's House				•		
Leighton House				•	•	
Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms	•		•	•		•
National Army Museum			•			
London's Transport Museum	•			•		
Science Museum	•		•	•		

Other plans cited: public tours, rationalise collection, creation of visible storage, increased publicity, longer study room hours, events for specialist groups, improve displays, move all stored material on-site.

Source: Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey.

Table 1.9. Survey 1: Strategies for improving access to stored collections, if provided with unlimited resources

Respondent	Improvements to store or study room / New facility	All available on online database / catalogue	Other display related changes	Other outreach activity	Other
Royal Academy, Paintings and Sculpture	•				All objects on-site
British Museum, Prints and Drawings		•			
Royal Academy, Works on Paper	•			Publicity	
Museum of Childhood	•			Promote visits to store	
Theatre Museum				Publicity, tours, themed events with theatre professionals, longer study room hours	
Wesley's Chapel and the Museum of Methodism		•	regular rotation of objects	Tours	
Hampstead	•	•	More display space	Loan boxes, talks with objects	
British Optical Museum			All displayed, no storage		
Old Operating Theatre Museum	•				
Firepower!			All displayed		

Imperial War Museum, Exhibitions and Firearms	•		More galleries	More loans to other institutions	Rationalise collection
National Army Museum	•	•			
London's Transport Museum				Handling sessions, joint events with other museums, Education Dept. More involved	Consultant to recommend further possibilities
Science Museum	•	•		Tours	

Source: Survey 1: Stored Collections Survey

Appendix 2
Survey 2: Visitor Perception Survey
Questionnaire:
Do you think all of the Museum's objects are displayed?
How did you become aware of the fact that museums tend to store some objects?
How many objects do you think the Museum possesses?
What percentage is on display? [only asked if responded 'No' to Question 1]
Do you know how to access an object not on display?
Should a greater effort be made to inform visitors of how to access stored objects?
Why do you think some objects are stored rather than exhibited?
How do you think stored objects are used?

Tables analysing the results of Survey 2 are shown in the text.