

Museum Information Management: Adapting to Change

Quick Guide 6: Real-life Implementation

Introduction

Many museums are experiencing a reduction in resources and/or changes to their status or governance. Whatever the size, type, location or funding of your museum, it is likely that it will need to withstand the impact of significant change in the economic environment.

Effective information policies and information management can be vital tools in helping museums make important decisions and maintain confidence in all aspects of their work. This series of *Quick Guides* provides you with a means of understanding the change your museum may be facing and the impact it may have on your information management. It provides you with a framework for identifying and managing the attendant risks and opportunities. The overall approach is one of pro-active and constructive engagement with the process of change, as a means of helping your museum not only survive the process, but also to thrive.

This final *Quick Guide* provides you with an insight into the realities of implementing the actions which are set out in the rest of the series. It is based on the experiences of museums which have moved through the process of change.

Scope

The Quick Guide to Real-life Implementation provides you with:

- A reminder of the steps to take in order to **engage constructively** with the process of change
- Guidance on compiling a coherent **plan of action** based on real-life experience
- A reminder of the importance of obtaining a **mandate** and **resources** for your plan
- An explanation of the importance of effective **communication** and **political awareness** in order to ensure the success of your plan
- References for further reading

Principles

Whatever the nature of the change which your museum may be facing, it is important to take a positive and pro-active approach in order to ensure that your information management can continue to be effective. The previous steps in the process of managing change in relation to your museum's information management have helped you to:

- **understand the change** which your museum is encountering
- **identify the issues** which may arise, particularly as a result of separating from a parent organisation or merging with another museum.
- **identify, assess and manage the risks** to information management which may arise
- **identify, evaluate and develop opportunities** that may be presented.

The results of this process need to be converted into a coherent **plan of action**. As with any plan, successful implementation will require agreement and active support from within your museum as well as staff and resources. During a time of change your plan will also be particularly dependent upon effective communication, engagement of colleagues and political awareness.

Prioritising and planning your actions

You should now have an improved understanding of the change faced by your museum as well as the specific nature of the issues, risks and opportunities presented. You should also have a good understanding of the *most important* issues, the *highest* risks, the opportunities holding the *most potential* for your museum and the actions required to manage these. Your plan should reflect these priorities; it should also take account of themes shared by actions in each area of your analysis. Consider the following steps as a means of starting to build your plan:

- Begin with the **highest priorities** from each of the previous stages;
- **Group similar actions** together in order to start to organise your plan; also to identify actions sharing common goals;
- For each action or group of actions, identify which of the eight information management areas are most affected;
- Understanding how actions will impact on the museum as a whole will enable you to make your plan relevant to the wider organisation. Consider therefore identifying actions or groups of actions which relate to the following aspects of your museum:
 - The role of your museum or its core goals;
 - How your museum achieves its goals;
 - The systems and tools used by your museum;
 - Staff and resources available to your museum;
- Review your list of actions and determine whether:
 - Any of your actions share common dependencies;
 - Any of your actions relating to prioritised risks might also enable opportunities you have identified;
- Begin to apply realistic timescales for the actions and the dependencies between them.
- Consider whether your priorities may require revision based on the extent of the impact of different actions - either across multiple information management areas or across the museum.
- Estimate the potential costs and savings of your actions. A realistic 'broad brush' will be a good start - the aim here is to understand the scale and relative size of any cost or saving.

Developing an Action plan

The following process is an example of one method that could be used to develop an action plan:

- 1. Identify the major information groupings held and any issues associated with them**
Conduct an information audit and/or records management survey to ascertain the number, scope and use of information resources held. This can be complemented by carrying out the analysis processes described in the earlier *Quick Guides*.
- 2. Developing a top-level action plan.**
This can be based broadly around the prioritisation and grouping process described in the previous section. The plan will need to identify where it may be necessary to develop more detailed plans, for example ICT infrastructure and information management areas may form key groups of actions.
- 3. Identifying ICT infrastructure actions**
Examples of key ICT infrastructure actions that may be needed include the following:
 - **Licensing of software** (e.g. cost and implementation of new software licenses)
 - **Hardware** (e.g. determining ownership of hardware; transferring/purchasing /disposing of hardware)
 - **Networked infrastructure** (e.g. availability, cost & logistics of a new network & domain or assessment of implications of consolidating two networks)
 - **Intranet** (e.g. availability of intranet service; division & ownership of content or assessment of duplication in the case of a merger)
 - **Email** (e.g. management; availability of software; dividing emails generated by different segments of the organisation)
 - **Backups** (e.g. establishing ownership of systems; implementing new mechanisms; dividing or joining systems and securing legacy information)
 - **Shared systems** (e.g. identifying continued sharing arrangements; putting in place appropriate agreements)
- 4. Identifying information management actions**
Create a profile for each information resource grouping similar to that provided below. Your museum should consider the issues identified for each of the profile elements:

Element	Issues to consider
Name of resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where information is duplicated across your museum it will be necessary to be specific about the resource being described.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include information about the date, scope and extent of the resource.
File formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of migrating between file formats may be prohibitive; specialist software may be required to support transferred data.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include information about the physical location of the resource within the ICT infrastructure (including back-ups), in storage etc.
Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about who currently creates, manages and accesses a resource will inform decision-making about its future ownership and management.
Legal, security & privacy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include FOI, IPR and DPA issues as well as additional curatorial or security considerations.
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about who is currently responsible for the resource.
Future ownership decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track and document decisions made about the future ownership of a resource. Usually a decision will be made to retain ownership, transfer ownership, share a resource or physically divide a resource. This decision will have a direct impact on other aspects of the resource profile.
Timescale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree a timescale for implementing the future ownership decision, including an endpoint beyond which the future owner(s) will take over responsibility including the resolution of any ongoing issues.
Transfer lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be necessary for one party to lead and drive the transfer or merging of ownership of a resource.
Practical constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There may be a number of practical constraints and dependencies affecting the transfer of a resource, e.g. ICT and networked infrastructure, the availability of software licenses or the availability of a post-holder with the prerequisite skills for managing the resource.
Pre-transfer dependencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to avoid duplication of effort or the transfer of inaccurate information it may first be necessary to carry out a data cleaning or other 'housekeeping' activities such as the collocation of multiple or fragmented datasets held across your museum.
Resource requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of the staff, equipment, financial and other resources required to carry out the transfer will be required. This may initially be an estimate to inform decision-making; costs can be refined over time.

5. Cross-resource issues

In addition to documenting its decision-making in relation to specific information resources, you may also find it necessary to consider a range of issues which are relevant to all resources, including the following:

- Agreeing principles for handling legacy information, including data held in non-current file formats, embedded in corporate applications (e.g. Outlook) and in backups.
- Determining ongoing information responsibilities both during and beyond the period of transition including a contingency period (e.g. FOI, IPR, DPA).
- The need to be flexible and incorporate additional issues identified during the planning process.

6. Tips

The following practical tips may also be helpful in your planning process:

- You won't be able to second-guess all the issues which will arise during the process of change. Agree a mechanism for addressing additional issues post-separation or post-merger.
- Be prepared for grey areas! Information resources overlap; systems and information cannot always be easily separated (e.g. specialist data formats, email and email software).
- Agree which part of the separating or merging organisation will own and drive the process of change.
- Be prepared for the process to be complex and for the decisions you make to have a long-term impact on your museum or partners.

Implementing your plan

It will be important to consider the following as you move towards the implementation of your plan:

Obtaining a mandate

It is essential that your museum accepts and understands the need to prepare for the impact of change on the management of its information resources. The need for this type of planning may already be understood; less likely may be the scale, depth and impact of the work required. In the approach outlined above, the process of 'identifying major information groupings' is important in highlighting the scale of the task from the outset. A museum-wide framework can then be agreed for investigating, discussing and making decisions about information resources and associated issues.

Obtaining resources

As indicated in the 'profile' table above it is important to determine the scale of the resources required to manage the process of change. Your museum should understand that identifying resource requirements is a process; as more issues are uncovered then resource requirements will change. Resources may need to be prioritised in order to protect essential activities.

Communicating effectively

Engaging colleagues at all stages of the process will be vital in the success of your plan. Staff will have concerns about the process from their own perspectives - but even so may not be aware of wider implications. Ensure that you use established channels for informing and working with senior staff and governing bodies. You will need to be prepared for negotiation; ensure that you can explain clearly the need for funds, staff and equipment.

The importance of political awareness

The experience of other museums is that staff may not initially consider information management to be central to the process of change until the process is imminent or even under way. As work begins your museum may suddenly comprehend the issues at stake and you may find as a result that colleagues become very territorial about their resources. At this point it will be important to remember that organisational politics are not necessarily negative - they may be an opportunity to develop an understanding of the bigger picture to engage with people's ideas and concerns.

Your information management plan may be regarded as an opportunity for the museum during the process of change; for example:

- Your plan might help relieve or deliver on expectations placed upon your museum by external or internal pressures;
- You may be able to identify easy wins for the museum, thereby easing the process of change.

Further reading

The other five *Quick Guides* in this series provide more detailed advice on the steps to follow to help ensure that your information management is in the best possible shape to support your museum in times of change. The other titles in the series are:

- Quick Guide 1: *Understanding Change*
- Quick Guide 2: *Surviving Separation*
- Quick Guide 3: *Museum Mergers*
- Quick Guide 4: *Assessing Risk*
- Quick Guide 5: *Maximising Opportunities*

Find out more about the experiences of museums who have undergone status change by reading:

Moving to Museum Trusts: Learning from Experience, MLA: 2006

Part 1: Strategic Overview

Part 2: The Process of Devolution

<http://www.egeria.org.uk/online-resources/>

Find out more about successful and constructive change management by going to:

Local Government Improvement and Development: Change Management

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=5829768>

Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H. *Our Iceberg is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions*, Macmillan, 2006