London Museums Hub

Information Policy Toolkit

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Acknowledgments

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About the Information Policy Toolkit

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1.1 Who is the Information Policy Toolkit for?

If you have overall responsibility, whether formal or informal, for museum information beyond that which you create and use directly, then you can make use of the Information Policy Toolkit. It does not assume that you are an information specialist, or that you or anyone else has a formal responsibility for information across your organisation. It will help you and your museum develop an understanding of effective corporate information management and how to achieve it regardless of the size or scope of your museum. The toolkit does not assume that you have specific staff, financial or ICT resources available. It is intended for use in any museum context, and assumes that you will adapt its use according to your circumstances.

1.2 What is in the Information Policy Toolkit?

The Information Policy Toolkit contains documents and guidance to enable your museum to begin the process of developing and implementing your own Information Policy. The tools provided will not complete this process, since the idea of an Information Policy is to put in place an ongoing programme of addressing your organisation's information needs over time and to link this into your corporate strategy and planning. The toolkit will help you kick-start the process and put in place the necessary organisational and management approaches to sustain the activities you will need to carry out.

1.2.1 Toolkit elements

The Information Policy Toolkit contains the following elements:

Toolkit elements	Purpose
Background and context information	To help you answer the question 'Why do we need an information policy?
Information Policy Framework	To guide you in developing an information policy for your museum
Information needs analysis tools	To help you find out more about how your museum uses information and what the priority areas for action might be
Information audit tools	To help you establish what information exists where; who uses it and who is responsible for it
Information mapping tools	To tell your museum what information exists and how to find it
Information policy development tools	To help you write, agree and manage your information policy
Further reading and references	To develop your understanding of the context for this work and how other organisations have used it

1.2.2 Case studies

As explained in 2.1 below, the toolkit was developed by the London Museums Hub [1], having established that there was little evidence of information policies in use across the cultural sector. As a result of this, and the positive outcomes of their own work, the Hub sought to share their work as widely as possible via the toolkit. In order to explain how the Information Policy Framework can be adopted in a variety of settings, the toolkit provides a series of case studies where relevant, based on the Hub museums' own experiences. Where relevant, their 'real-life' examples of how the toolkit can be implemented are highlighted.

1.3 How to use the Information Policy Toolkit

It does not take long to draft an information policy, but it can take some time to prepare the ground, educate your organisation about why it needs an information policy and demonstrate how it can help.

As an example, some of the museums who have worked on the project needed less than a day to draft their policy – but were only able to do so after some months of consultation with their peers, gaining senior management support and finding out what areas of their work needed to be reflected in the policy. This was not a full-time effort – far from it – however it did require someone to drive the process and ensure that momentum was maintained. Typically, it will take 3-6 months to reach the point where you have a draft policy. This may take longer in a larger organisation; less time in a small organisation or one where there is already an accepted need for an information policy at senior management level.

Just as your museum will have its own information-related priorities and concerns which will affect your information policy, the way in which you use this toolkit will vary. However, what will be common to every museum is the need to prepare for change – as well as to learn about your museum's priorities in relation to its information policy. This means that the following sequence of actions set out in the diagram below is advisable, even though you can be more flexible about what elements to deploy when within each area of work.

[1] The London Museums Hub is a partnership between four museums, the Museum of London, the London Transport Museum, the Horniman Museum and the Geffrye Museum. One of nine Hubs across England established under the Renaissance in the Regions scheme, it is funded through the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

1. Prepare the ground

Objectives
- Inform yourself about the need for an Information Policy
- Explain to your museum why you need an Information Policy
- Gain agreement to develop and implement your Information Policy.

Toolkit elements
- Background and context information
- Information policy framework.

Develop your knowledge — read around the subject and ask other museums about what they've done.

Further reading and references.

2. Agree your approach

Objectives
- Agree how you are going to develop and implement your Information Policy
- Ensure your museum assigns responsiblity for managing it
- Ensure your museum assigns responsibility for managing information across the organisation
- Explain the approach to colleagues and agree priority actions.

Toolkit elements
- Information policy framework
- Information needs analysis tools.

Develop your knowledge — talk to other museums about the benefits of different approaches and tactics for introducing them in your museum

Further reading and references.

3. Find out about your museum's information needs

Objectives
- Explore and understand the ways in which your museum creates, manages and uses information
- Develop an understanding of your museum's information-related priorities

Toolkit elements
- Information needs analysis tools.

Develop your knowledge — research the sector – what are other museums' priorities and how might stake-holder expectations change in the future?

Further reading and references.

4. Find out about your museum's information assets and share the results

Objectives
- Undertake an information audit to find out what information is created, managed and used across the museum, where it is and who is responsible for it
- Develop an understanding of your museum's information behaviour.

Toolkit elements
- Information audit tools
- Information mapping tools.

Develop your knowledge — look beyond the sector to find out how others have undertaken audits – how have they presented and used the resulting information?

Further reading and references.

5. Develop and maintain an Information Policy

Objectives
- Develop an information policy; ensure your museum adopts and maintains it.

Toolkit elements
- Information policy framework
- Information policy development tools.

Develop your knowledge — look for other information policies – use them to inform the scope of yours.

Further reading and references.

Background and context information

2

2.1 About the London Museums Hub Information Policy project

Information is a core asset for museums. It explains and provides access to our collections; it is at the heart of museums' ethical, professional and legal responsibilities. The London Museums Hub has therefore proposed the development of a shared framework to enable members to develop their information policies.

In 2007 the London Museums Hub began a two-year project to help member museums and the wider community to develop strategic awareness of information management. The aim of the project was to help museums to ensure that they are equipped to manage and use their information resources as responsibly and as innovatively as possible.

Initial research established that many of the organisations who have successfully taken advantage of the potential of strategic planning for information are within the HE sector. HEFCE [2] suggest that universities regard their information policies and the strategies they underpin as:

- A set of attitudes rather than a report
- A process rather than as a product.

Although all museums have local information-related issues to address, some concerns and goals are shared by organisations across the cultural heritage sector.

It was with this approach in mind that an **Information Policy Framework** was commissioned by the Hub. The intention was to provide a checklist of elements which any information policy should encompass, while providing museums with prompts for issues which they may choose to prioritise within each element.

Developing and implementing information policies means that museums should have the potential to ensure that:

- Information is accessible and available for sharing
- The quality of information matches the purposes of its users
- Museum staff know and exercise their responsibilities towards information
- Information-related priorities can be clearly identified and acted on.

Each of the Hub museums has begun their implementation of the Information Policy Framework which was launched to the wider museum community in March 2009. This Toolkit (which includes the aforementioned framework) is intended to help other museums to begin developing and implementing their own information policies by sharing the resources which were developed as part of the Hub roll-out.

[2] Higher Education Funding Council for England – responsible for funding English universities and further education colleges.

2.2 What is information?

There are many definitions and concepts for the term information. In the context of this tool and for clarity we base our definitions on the ones given by the UK Government in a recent publication on the subject. [3]

Terms

Information
Produced through processing, manipulating and organising data to answer questions, adding to the knowledge of the receiver.

Data
Data are numbers, words or images that have yet to be organised or analysed to answer a specific question.

Knowledge
What is known by a person or persons. Involves interpreting information received, adding relevance and context to clarify the insights the information contains.

Typical examples of museum information can include:

- Personnel files
- Exhibition labels and panel texts
- A report on visitors to the museum
- A collections management database
- A database of contacts
- A museum flickr account
- A catalogue of objects
- Collections management procedures
- Research publications.

Typical examples of museum data can include:

- Unsorted images in a shared directory
- Visitor numbers on daily tally sheets
- Environmental monitoring indicators in an automated system.

Typical examples of museum knowledge can include:

- Institutional memory of the museum's history, often known by long-term staff members
- Unwritten knowledge held by the staff about the object collections
- Subject specialist intelligence (undocumented art history, conservation, library and archives, building facilities, expertise of museum staff members).

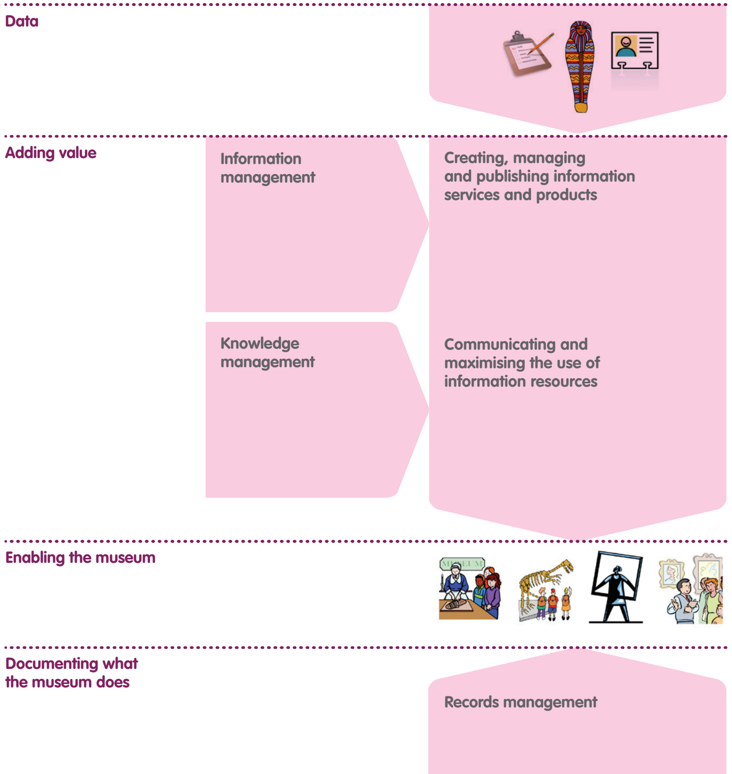
[3] HM Government Information Matters: building government's capability in managing knowledge and information Crown Copyright 2008.

Information management differs from records management in that records management is concerned with the formal documentation of an organisation's business and 'the process by which a…[museum]…manages all the elements of records whether externally or internally generated and in any format or media type, from their inception/receipt, all the way through to their disposal'. [4]

Records management is therefore concerned with the evidence of what an organisation does and as such, is an important subset of information management, which is concerned with enabling an organisation to do what it does, through the effective creation, management and sharing of information.

The diagram below shows the relationship between data, information, knowledge, records and information management in a museum.

Data, information, knowledge and records management in museums



[4] Records Management Society, http://www.rms-gb.org.uk/about retrieved November 2009.

2.3 What is an information policy?

An information policy will provide you with a context for making decisions about the way in which your museum creates, uses, provide access to, manages and preserves its information resources. An information policy should take account of legal, political, economic, professional, ethical and user expectations in order to set out a museum-wide view of:

- What 'information' means to the museum
- The objectives of information use in the museum
- The objectives of information services provided by the museum
- The principles of managing information which need to be applied across the museum
- The principles for the use and development of human and technological resources and for ensuring cost-effectiveness
- How information relates to the museum's overall objectives.

The Information Policy Framework developed by the London Museums Hub will enable museums to develop an effective information policy which in turn, will form the basis for museums to determine their own information strategies. These strategies should describe how the museum intends to create, manage and use its information according to the priorities imposed by its respective corporate plan.

2.4 What are the benefits of having an information policy?

Evidence from museums which have begun to take an organisation-wide view of their information suggests that this focused approach can result in a number of benefits, including the following:

- All information resources and activities can be integrated into the museum's objectives and there is clarity about their significance and use
- Decisions about information resources and related activities are informed by and support the museum's corporate goals
- The museum can focus on specific information-related priorities, increasing the potential for productivity and innovation
- Users have access to relevant and coherent information services which meet their expectations
- Staff across the museum are encouraged to work collaboratively
- A forum can be established to allow the museum to respond to external change and technological development
- Museums are able to plan systems and ICT infrastructure according to their information goals
- Museums are aware of, and can therefore ensure that staff are able to manage relevant legal and professional responsibilities
- Staff are aware of the value of the information they create, manage and share. They understand that hidden or inaccessible (i.e. 'tacit') information does not have a value unless it is made accessible and is therefore able to be managed and shared effectively.

2.5 What are the risks of not having an information policy?

Many museums do not currently have information policies and as a result, the following risks are frequently evident across the sector:

- Off-the-cuff or uninformed decisions about information services divert from museums' goals and consume vital resources
- Museums risk being 'technology led' in a world of rapid technological development which can divert resources
- Projects are developed which are not relevant to a museum's priorities, often simply to take advantage of a funding opportunity
- ICT infrastructure may not be appropriate to a museum's needs; it may be insufficiently developed or over-specified
- Users of information services are confronted by an uncoordinated and inconsistent set of services across the museum
- Museums may not address core responsibilities appropriately
- Staff are not aware of, or trained to deal with, legal and ethical issues relating to information creation, management and use.

2.6 Obtaining a mandate

Despite the risks of not having an information policy, you may find it necessary to focus on obtaining a mandate for developing and implementing one in your organisation. Consider asking the following questions within your museum – the answers your colleagues give may prompt them to develop a greater understanding of the issues at stake:

- Do you record information about the same individual, activity or event or object in many different places?
- How much time is spent by your museum retrieving information or recreating it?
- Do you know what information you hold and where it is?
- What are the most important information assets you hold?
- Do you have the information required to implement your museum's strategic objectives?
- Who is responsible for creating that information?
- What measures are you putting in place to ensure the long-term viability of that information?
- How do you prioritise what information work should be done first?
- Is the organisation able to share information with confidence and ease, both internally and externally?

Time spent obtaining a mandate at senior management level will help ensure that colleagues take the policy seriously. One of the 'enabling actions' identified in the Information Policy Framework is intended to help you achieve this. In addition to senior management support, other ways of overcoming barriers and challenges you may encounter include the following:

'We do that already'

Arguments: It is probable that there are pockets of good practice in your museum, but unless there is a corporate effort to manage information effectively in a way which is both sustainable and understood by all, then any 'pockets' will remain just that; they will not be joined up and your museum will not gain maximum value from its knowledge resources.

Tactics: Identify an organisation (not necessarily a museum) which truly has taken a corporate approach to information and explain how this has helped it succeed.

'It's just bureaucracy'

Arguments: The point about having an information policy is that it can streamline your organisation. Decisions can be made more quickly and in an informed manner. It encourages information-related discussions to be focused on specific issues and helps prevent your museum from revisiting the same issues repeatedly and without resolution. An information policy need only be **1–2 pages** long but it can help solve a lot of your museum's knottier problems.

Tactics: Use a copy of an existing information policy (see Section 8 for some ideas) to show that the simpler the policy, the better. Identify a group which already meets, which could shift its remit to accommodate information policy work.

'We haven't got the resources'

Arguments: Your museum is without doubt tackling some of the issues already – but probably in a disjointed way. Having a policy and a proper decision-making forum will help make the most of your museum's time. By taking some key decisions (e.g. information access) across the organisation will allow staff to progress projects more quickly and easily without agonising over the same decisions repeatedly. Also, information is an asset – can your organisation afford not to capitalise on it?

Tactics: Talk to colleagues involved in different projects and identify common issues which they have spent time trying to resolve. Explain how a corporate policy decision could have helped progress their projects.

Identify information services which could be created or improved (e.g. marketing, development or eCommerce) with access to well-managed information (e.g. a museum-wide approach to managing names of donors, customers and friends etc).

‘We have other priorities at present’

Arguments: Whatever your museum’s other priorities, the way it achieves these goals can only be enhanced by having a well-considered information policy, able to be implemented in a targeted way to reflect and support those priorities. The point of the policy is to help your museum do what it needs to do, but better – not to divert it.

Tactics: Identify issues which are being encountered within your museum’s existing priorities, and explain how an information policy could help. For example, imagine your museum is undertaking an overhaul of its exhibition spaces or installing museum-wide cabling. An active information policy might identify the need to assign responsibility for naming, documenting and signposting spaces, maintaining this information and linking it to plans.

‘The time’s just not right for this kind of thing – maybe after this big exhibition project’

Arguments: Having a major project to manage is precisely when an information policy can come into its own by ensuring not only that the project runs smoothly but that the information it generates can be managed and made accessible, thereby capturing knowledge for future use. By their very nature, projects can threaten business continuity.

Tactics: This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate the value of an information policy by using an exhibition project as a pilot. Work with the project manager to identify the information-related issues which the project is likely to encounter. Agree a ‘project information policy’ to ensure that all involved are clear about their information responsibilities and to act as a focus for identifying information-related issues and making project-wide decisions on these. Depending on your existing role within the organisation this might result in pre-empting problems which would have impacted on your work – and demonstrating the value of a pro-active approach to these will help persuade your senior management of the need for a corporate approach to information policy.

‘Staff really aren’t that bothered – they’ll never take the time to do this kind of thing’

Arguments: Staff may not be bothered about an information policy as such if they have not had the opportunity to use one in the past. If they can see the benefits of having a policy then they will be encouraged to change their ‘information behaviour’ to enable them to take advantage of those benefits.

Tactics: Find a small number of individuals who are either opinion-formers within your museum, or who are good ‘informal communicators’, or who senior managers might expect to be the least inclined to adopt an information policy. Identify an information-related issue which matters to these colleagues and find a way of convincing them of the difference which an information policy might make to their work. This might be by discussing some aspect of their work and explaining how an information policy might resolve an issue, by involving them in a related project or by introducing them to someone in another museum where an information policy has helped make a difference. Build their enthusiasm and use them as advocates to help convince colleagues and senior managers.

Information Policy Framework

3

3.1 About the Information Policy Framework

The Information Policy aims to provide museums with a 'checklist' of information-related elements which can be used to ensure that a museum's information policy covers all the issues which may need to be addressed.

The Framework is divided into a number of elements which reflect standard approaches to information policy development, but which also take account of the issues raised by Hub museums' management and staff during a detailed consultation process. As a result of this consultation, and the subsequent implementation of the Framework in the Hub museums, the Framework can be regarded as sufficiently stable to provide a useful tool for other museums.

It is intended that the Framework should be applicable to any museum, and should address all the information issues, not simply collections-related information. It is relevant to all types of museum but each individual museum will need to decide what elements should be prioritised.

The important exceptions to this flexible approach are the three initial objectives within the section of the Framework 'Enabling effective information management and access'. These can be regarded as enabling activities that underpin other areas of the Framework; they are as follows:

- **Assign responsibility for information across the museum**
  This does not need to be a new post! Your museum is likely to have at least one person who already has some responsibility for information beyond their own area of work. This might be a museum archivist, documentation manager, senior curator or librarian. They may have some information skills relating to their own area of work and are probably already involved in the delivery of information services across the museum and/or to the public.
- **Develop and maintain a museum 'Information map'**
  Usually the result of an information audit (see Sections 5 and 6 below), this is a document or online resource which sets out what information can be found where across your museum, and who is responsible for it. It is a crucial resource which you will need to refer to whatever other elements of the information policy framework you choose to prioritise.
- **Enable effective communication of information management issues**
  Your museum will need some forum for discussing, making and communicating information-related decisions. It does not have to be a committee just for this purpose, necessitating yet another meeting. It is likely that you will have some group which already meets to address related issues (e.g. digitisation, website, ICT) whose remit can be broadened to provide a context for the work it already does.

Without these enabling activities, you are unlikely to develop a useful Information Policy, or implement it successfully. Further details of these activities are provided within the Framework.

As well as highlighting issues for individual museums to consider, each of the elements of the Framework also contains issues which could equally be addressed collaboratively by groups of museums.

As indicated in Section 1.3 above, it can take 3–6 months to prepare the ground for and agree an information policy; initial implementation will take at least as long, depending on your museum's priorities. However it is realistic to prepare for and agree an information policy, and achieve the three 'enabling activities' identified above, within a year.

The Information Policy Framework can be found here and a summary of its contents is as follows:

Enabling effective information management and access

Knowing what information is where, who is responsible for it and to put in place processes to manage and provide access to it, thereby enabling the security and preservation of information and promoting business continuity.

Informing strategic thinking

Ensuring that information is managed strategically; that it can be informed by, and underpin corporate priorities and contribute to innovation within the museum.

Gathering and using management information

Managing the provision of performance and management information effectively and rationally.

Developing cohesive services and products

Taking a broad view of information services and products so as to be able to plan these in response to user needs in the context of the wider information marketplace.

Developing effective records management

Ensuring that the public record of museums' business is properly documented and managed.

Developing and sharing skills

Ensuring that museums have access to appropriate skills to enable the implementation of the Information Policy Framework.

Recognising the cost and value of information

Establishing processes to capture and share information, and to develop a museum-wide ethos which reflects the intrinsic value of information. Recognition of cost and value will also raise awareness of the need for preservation and security of information.

Fulfilling legal and ethical responsibilities

Ensuring that museums fulfil their legal and ethical obligations.

Information needs analysis tools

4

4.1 Information needs analysis tools

The purpose of an information needs analysis process is to:

- Find out about the kinds of information created, managed and used within your museum
- Understand what kind of information is important to staff, and why
- Identify information which is difficult to find, and why
- Characterise the 'information behaviour' that exists within your museum
- Identify some key issues to address at an individual level later in the Information Policy development process.

By involving people from across the museum in the process, the needs analysis also begins to raise awareness of the value of information, and prompts people to start thinking about the value of the information they create, manage and use.

A good way of initiating the information needs analysis is to hold one or more discussion groups. By using a series of discussion prompts it is possible to gain insights into how information is created and used within your museum, and to understand how it supports (or blocks) the effective management and sharing of information.

An example of the briefing issued to participants of a discussion session is available at Appendix A, and examples of discussion prompts used are provided in Appendix B. Not all these prompts can be fitted into a single session; use the ones which seem to suit the aims of your session and which reflect the experience, skills and concerns of your museum. **A discussion session can last up to 90 minutes**, perhaps longer with a break, but it is advisable not to extend the session too long as it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain participants' interest.

It is important to involve participants from across the museum as this not only gives rise to more stimulating discussion but also increases participants' awareness of information which is created and managed by colleagues in other departments. This can have the knock-on benefit of increasing the sense of value of that information by its creators, and potentially encouraging cross-museum collaboration. A useful number of people is 12–15; although it is possible to have a productive discussion with fewer participants the scope may necessarily be narrower. If your museum only has a small number of staff then you might try to involve them all. Refreshments and pleasant surroundings will help keep participants engaged.

As indicated above, one of the main benefits of a discussion session is the potential to develop an understanding of information behaviour. This relates to the way in which people communicate and share information (or not) and how people use information when working to achieve common goals. By discussing information with groups of people rather than relying on written or individual verbal responses, information behaviour can be revealed. This can highlight examples of good practice (e.g. inter-departmental 'coffee mornings' where information is shared) as well as identify less helpful practices such as the reluctance to share information because of unfounded 'security' concerns.

During the session, keep a note of participants' responses. You may choose to use a computer to make notes, but a flip-chart can be simpler; it is more immediate and less disconcerting to participants who may feel nervous about their contributions being captured even in an informal digital document. In any case, analysis of the results will be required, meaning that little time is saved through direct input during the session.

The results of the session should be analysed to identify:

- Recurring themes reflecting common concerns or opportunities
- Issues which may be linked in some way
- Organisational priorities.

You may find it useful to compare your notes to the Information Policy Framework as a means of grouping items, or identifying issues which map directly or indirectly to information policy.

The results of the information needs analysis are most likely to take the form of a short report which should help shape and focus subsequent consultation and the information audit; it will also highlight areas which should be addressed by the information policy.

Information audit tools

5

5.1 Purpose of information audit

The primary objective of the Information Audit is to identify all information resources across the museum and for each resource, identify:

- Who uses it?
- Who contributes to it?
- Who is responsible for it?
- Where is it located, both physically and within the museum's organisational structure?
- What format the resource exists in (e.g. database, paper file etc.)?

The Information Audit helps identify information resources which are:

- In use by individual or multiple staff
- Could potentially have a wider application across the museum
- Duplicated across museum areas.

The process is intended to help ensure that:

- The person or department responsible for any information resource is known
- Effective policies or procedures are in place to support the creation or management of resources
- Effective systems to support the creation and management of, and access to, information resources are in place and supported
- Information is not duplicated across the museum
- Information resources are of an appropriate quality
- Staff and funding are being used effectively
- Information creation, management and use are guided by the appropriate legal and ethical constraints.

5.2 Overall approach to Information Audit

Two different methodologies for undertaking the Information Audit are proposed:

- Interviews
- Self-audit.

These are described in further detail in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 below. The scope of each type of audit was to determine the following information about each information resource identified:

- Name and departmental location
- Physical storage location
- Physical format (e.g. paper-based, digital)
- Whether the resource was contributed to or simply used by the respondent
- Whether the respondent was responsible for the resource.

Case study: Taking the interview approach – smaller museum's experience

The interview approach was used in the smallest of the Hub museums where it was possible to interview over half of all staff (c. 25 interviews) over a period of four days. The benefit of this approach was that a thorough understanding of the information-related issues was built up over the interview process. The results of this process were:

- The identification of a number of information-related issues across the museum, which need to be prioritised for action and which should be reflected in the museum's Information Policy
- A list of all the information resources identified across the museum.

The results of the interview process including a list of information resources identified and key issues, were written up in 1–2 days.

In larger museums individual interviews of a large proportion of staff may be prohibitively time-consuming and costly. If you have a large number of staff the 'information self-audit' approach may allow you to make your information audit more efficient.

Despite the size of your museum however, it will be advisable not to rely solely on a self-audit as a means of information-gathering.

Additional interview and/or discussion opportunities will provide the opportunity to:

- Validate the self-audit results by comparison
- Explore issues highlighted by the self-audit in more detail
- Address issues which participants will not be able to document themselves, for example 'information behaviour' – how and in what circumstances do people communicate and share information informally?

This type of information gathering results in more qualitative and narrative results which can help explain and prioritise issues highlighted in the more quantitative results of the self-audit process.

Case study: Combining audit approaches – larger museum's experience

At the Museum of London it was acknowledged from the outset that the results of this process would not provide the level of qualitative information that had been obtained by interview in the first of the Hub museums to undertake an information audit. For this reason a series of interviews and focus groups were also held. These involved 10–15 staff and served to both validate the results of the self audit, as well as to explore some of the issues highlighted in the self-audit results. The results of the self-audit were confirmed in the interviews and these together with the focus groups enabled the museum to receive not only the self-audit data listing information resources, but as with the first museum a report identifying and addressing the information-related issues discovered.

There will be a number of issues arising from the audit which it will be important to consider. These are:

5.2.1 Veracity of audit data

It is not always possible to query responses as part of the audit process. Users may feel that if they contributed to an information resource then they are responsible for it. It may be necessary therefore to provide additional briefing on this issue, and/or to confirm responses at a departmental level.

5.2.2 Sensitivity of audit data

Although the aim of an audit is not to identify and 'expose' individuals' personal information resources clearly these form part of the overall picture and perhaps indicate measures which might be taken to improve the sharing and management of information. This sensitivity also exists at a departmental level. Clearly one aim of the audit process is to ensure that information can be shared where appropriate, however the process for achieving this objective, and for disclosing information about personal and departmental resources, needs to be managed carefully. Follow-up interviews with individuals and departments may be a more constructive approach than simply disclosing audit information to the wider museum.

5.2.3 Need for repetition of audit

The audit process can only ever be a 'snapshot' of the information resources in an organisation at a given time. It will be necessary to consider how and when to repeat the process, for example once every three years. This decision will be affected by the use being made of the results of the audit. It may not be necessary to repeat a full audit but as part of the information self-audit, respondents could be invited to confirm their previous response and add or amend this as necessary. The goal would be for the audit to become accepted as an integral part of managing the museum.

5.2.4 Completeness of response

The responses provided by participants, particularly within the self-audit process, will vary widely as to completeness. Some staff may provide an exhaustive list of every information resource used; others may simply list the main online resources or 'departmental files'. Follow-up interviews with department heads should be undertaken in order to understand the extent to which the latter response reflects reality. Certainly some museum departments may be concerned at the potential for repetition and duplication of effort at the outset and so in some instances individuals should be identified to respond on behalf of a particular group of staff. It will be necessary to consider whether to devolve responsibility for responses to individual staff or to appoint representatives.

5.3 'Self-audit' questionnaire

Why use a questionnaire? The purpose of the self-audit approach is to allow a much larger set of participants to contribute to the audit process and is more time – and cost-effective for larger organisations then interviewing large numbers of staff. The most efficient way of making the questionnaire available is to use an online tool, many of which are freely available. Using a questionnaire allows respondents to choose when to make their return, although time will need to be set aside to explain, remind and chase staff to complete the questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaire can be optional; incentives can be provided in the form of a prize draw and repeated personal reminders will need to be sent out to ensure the highest level of responses within the timescale proposed. You may wish to consider making a return mandatory within your museum, but this might not necessarily be an option for the first audit while the process is still likely to be refined.

Case study: Creating a self audit questionnaire – larger museum's experience

The approach taken in the Museum of London was to ask staff to complete a questionnaire on Google Docs (http://docs.google.com) the results of which were automatically stored in spreadsheet format. Alternative online options included Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The questionnaire and briefing used are provided at Appendix E. One useful feature of the questionnaire format used was the ability for users to revisit and update their response after the initial submission. This was particularly important for users with wide-ranging information responsibilities, who often needed time to consider or compile responses.

The approach was tested with ten respondents and adjusted accordingly. Although this test was conducted primarily because this was the first time an information self-audit was known to have been conducted in this museum.

5.3.1 Testing your questionnaire

It may be helpful to carry out a test in any environment where the online questionnaire methodology is being introduced as there may be technical as well as terminology and communication issues to be resolved.

Piloting the questionnaire is a good way of checking that all is well. Consider asking key staff (for example the 'influencers' identified in Section 2.6 above, or perhaps known 'difficult' staff) to help test it.

5.3.2 Data gathering and handling issues

A key issue with a questionnaire approach is the need to balance the necessity for results which can be readily analysed and reported, with the need to provide respondents with open-ended opportunities to list resources which they create, manage and use. Online questionnaires allow the use of checkboxes to select options as well as drop-down lists for responses requiring controlled terminology (e.g. department name). However neither of these is appropriate for the actual listing of information resources since they limit the number and identity of permitted responses. Online questionnaires do not currently allow the use of 'repeating fields'. This means that the responses provided will require rationalisation and 'cleaning' in order to be used. Different respondents have different names for the information resources they use; this can be difficult to identify from the results. Free-text fields may have to be used for the listing of each type of information resource. Responses using online questionnaires will therefore need to be cleaned in order to categorise individual resources into specific fields as well as to rationalise the names used to identify resources.

In addition to lists of information resources the self-audit approach can also provide important qualitative information which can be explored in more depth through interviews and discussion groups. Examples of this type of question include:

- Difficulties encountered in finding or using information
- Personal approaches to managing information
- Ideas for improving information management and use
- Skills requirements.

The results of these questions will highlight a number of issues and recurring themes which can be fed into a prioritised issue/action list which in turn will inform the museum's information policy. The scope of the information obtained using these more open types of question highlight the importance of this dimension of the self-audit.

Case study: Handling self-audit data – larger museum's experience

The data gathered at the Museum of London was able to be loaded into a spreadsheet and sorted by field, in order to identify and correct anomalies.

The cleaning process was time-consuming (at least 2 days for c. 400 responses) and necessitated assumptions to be made about the respondents' intentions in providing some responses. Samples of data resulting from a self-audit both before and after this cleaning process are provided in Appendix F and Appendix G respectively.

5.3.3 Using and updating the results data

The cleaned data resulting from the questionnaire can then be used in the production of an Information Map as discussed in Section 6 below. It can also inform the museum about a number of other issues, including:

- Duplication of data maintained in individual departments (e.g. mailing lists)
- Conflicting responsibilities for information resources
- Absence of responsibility for information resources.

The first time you run your self-audit will be much more time-consuming as you resolve issues of format, information handling and analysis, however it will provide you with a starting point for future audits.

The data gathered during the audit is simply a snapshot which will gradually lose currency. Consider re-running your information audit every three years or so – this will allow you to track changes and detect trends.

5.4 Interviews

As indicated in 5.2 above, the interview approach can be used to identify and explore information-related issues in more depth, as well as to validate the results of the self-audit approach.

Staff should be briefed in advance; a sample briefing is provided at Appendix C.

Case study: Conducting interviews – small museum's experience

Although more time was required for interviewing and transcribing information at the smaller museum, the resulting data was more consistent than that obtained as a result of the self-audit because it was captured by a single individual. Interviews were scheduled to last approximately forty minutes with most using that time effectively.

Although a form was initially used to list resources, this was less helpful than expected as interviews often took a more discursive route when exploring information behaviour for instance. However where a wholly interview-led approach is being used for the audit, a form is a useful way of systematically recording information.

A productive approach is to invite an interviewee to describe a typical working day, and to talk through individual processes in some detail, identifying information resources used. It is important that the interviewer asserts control of the discussion from the outset. It may be necessary to ask participants to pause and describe some activities in more detail, especially at the beginning of the interview, since the interviewee will not initially know how much detail is required.

A sample of the results obtained in the first pilot museum is provided in Appendix D.

Information mapping tools

6

6.1 Information mapping tools

The purpose of an information map is to tell staff what information is held where in their museum, based on the results of an information audit. Many different types of information can be presented in a map including:

- What information is held where within an organisation
- Who contributes to and uses each information resource
- Who is responsible for an information resource
- Details of activities which use information, or which involve the management of information.

For museums, as knowledge-based organisations with a wide range of information resources, this presents challenges in terms of presenting the information clearly and making it accessible and meaningful. Moreover, it will be necessary to validate the information presented in the tools and ensure that it is used appropriately within your organisation.

6.2 Creating an information map

Information maps can be complex and difficult to produce and use; the most appropriate and usable solution for your museum will need to be considered carefully and proposals evaluated by prospective users. It may be necessary to create different versions or views of your map in order to provide access to different types of content.

References to information maps used in the higher education sector are provided in Section 8.3 below.

A range of tools and approaches are available for use in the creation of your information map. These include the following:

Spreadsheets and databases (e.g. Microsoft Excel®, Access®)
These provide a more systematic means of documenting and accessing your information map, with the ability to sort and report on key criteria as well as search. The disadvantage of this approach is the inability to see 'at a glance' where information is held within an organisation, or to obtain a broad, organisation-wide view.

Graphics packages (e.g. Viso®, Word®, Powerpoint®)
These allow you to present your information map in a graphic format – a useful approach particularly for presenting information to senior management. The presentation most often used is an organogram, where the results of the information audit are attached to the relevant person/post or department within an organisation. The drawback of this approach is that the creation of the graphic can be time-consuming and the map can be unwieldy.

Mind-mapping software
This type of software allows the creation and presentation of graphic information (e.g. an organogram) in a more dynamic form. Areas of the diagram can be expanded and retracted by clicking and data can be imported from some formats. However this software is not yet as widely used as other more common software solutions and maps can therefore be difficult to exchange and distribute.

As can be seen from the references provided in Section 8, a non-dynamic graphic approach to the production of a map can be achieved with specialist flow-charting or graphic software or simply the drawing functions available in Microsoft Word® and PowerPoint® for instance.

However the time taken to produce a useful graphic information map for a museum should not be underestimated. Ultimately, it may be possible to provide an online map via your museum's intranet however this should be seen as a tool which requires active management and updating. A longer-term goal may be to consider ways in which users can contribute knowledge to the information map on an ongoing basis; if successful and regularly monitored this would remove the need to carry out a full information audit.

Case study: Creating an informatlion map – smaller museum's experience

At the smaller of the museums where an information audit was undertaken, the outcome was the description of c. 130 information resources which were recorded in a spreadsheet. This was able to be sorted and searched to identify duplicated information resources as well as critical areas within the organisation with responsibility for large amounts of information. A sample of the spreadsheet is provided at Appendix D.

Case study: Creating an information map – larger museum's experience

The results of the information self-audit carried out at the larger museum resulted in 1,800 entries. In order to provide easier access to these results, as well as to evaluate a more visual and 'at a glance' approach a number of information mapping options were researched. Chief among the criteria considered were:

- The need for a visual representation of the quantity of data gathered
- The need to spend a minimum of time on the production of the map.

As a result, a 'mind-mapping' software package (Mindjet's MindManager [5]) was used to produce a dynamic visual information map. The main benefits were perceived as follows:

- Ability to load data directly into the visual information map with automatic creation of graphic elements
- No need for specialist development skills although data does have to be formatted carefully using the Microsoft Word® 'Style' functions
- Ability to create a dynamic map, providing users with the opportunity to view the museum's departmental structure at the highest level and expand sections to explore their information resources
- Ability to search across the museum for specific information resources which are then displayed dynamically
- Ability to publish results to users via a standard format such as PDF (Adobe Acrobat®).

Examples of an evaluation sample of the information map produced are provided at Appendix H. These include:

- Top-level display of departments
- Expansion of a single department and displaying all the information resources for which it is responsible
- Display of results following a search for a specific term.

[5] www.mindjet.com

Case study: Evaluating the dynamic and graphic information map

The use of the mind-mapping software to generate a dynamic and graphic information map allowed the pilot museums to consider the implications and opportunities presented by this approach which was subsequently adopted to re-format the information audit data gathered at the smaller museum.

As a result of the evaluation of this approach, the following conclusions were made:

- The graphic presentation of the information map was helpful in developing an understanding of the scope of information across a museum
- The search facility meant that it was easy to spot duplication of effort and information
- Staff found it helpful to access information by department and from there, to investigate specific issues of completeness, accuracy etc.
- The graphic approach combined with the search facility would potentially provide a useful tool for end-users, although issues relating to sensitivity and accuracy would first need to be addressed
- More sophisticated database-linking facilities would be required before an information map could be generated without additional manipulation of the data as the use of Microsoft Word® style sheets was limiting.

6.3 Validating and using the information map

When you create your first information map it will be necessary to ensure that the information it contains is accurate and fit for purpose. As your organisation's first map, it will also be necessary to ensure that people know about it, understand it and are comfortable with the level of disclosure relating to their information resources.

You may therefore wish to review it with contributors or departmental representatives in order to:

- Ensure that the information it contains is correct and that there are no omissions
- Identify potential sensitivities (e.g. confidential or security-related information) which ought not to be disclosed across the organisation
- Identify and discuss issues arising from the map, e.g. duplication of or responsibility for information resources.

This review process may result in the need to address aspects of your information policy (e.g. issues relating to information access and ownership). Once the map has been validated with staff then you can consider publishing it, for example on your Intranet, or with your information policy. However you decide to make it accessible, it will be necessary to consider how the map can be used across your museum. Consider the following:

- Holding a briefing session to explain how it can help locate information resources
- Incorporating it into the induction process for new staff
- Ensuring that new projects are aware of it and use it to guide their information management
- Using it to inform museum strategy, e.g. information management priorities or ICT investment.

You may find that people use it in ways you have not envisaged, or that with adjustments it could be used more widely. Before it is updated, obtain feedback to ensure that it is presented as usefully as possible.

Case study: Validating and using the information map – larger museum's experience

The information map was reviewed in one to one meetings with heads of department who were asked a standard set of questions to ensure that the map reflected their information resources accurately. The raw data from the self-audit was used as a cross-check to help resolve misunderstandings and misinterpretations of responses.

Of particular concern in this large organisation was the need to ensure that information resources were identified correctly; also that responsibilities for resources were clearly understood. In order to clarify responsibility the museum is exploring the use of distinctions between different levels of responsibility, for example 'editorial' and 'custodial' responsibilities.

The museum expects to make the information map available via its Intranet and explore how it can be used.

Information policy development tools

7

7.1 Preparing the ground

Your museum's information policy should not be a long and complex document. Its value lies as much in the process of developing and agreeing it, as in the document itself. The work leading up to your first information policy will have resulted in the raising of the profile of information management in your organisation, an increased understanding of the value of information and the issues relating to the creation, management and use of information in your museum.

By the time you are ready to draft your museum's first information policy you will have familiarised yourself with the issues relating to information management in your museum and should have achieved the three underpinning actions set out in the Information Policy Framework, i.e:

- Assigned primary responsibility for information management in your museum
- Created an Information Map for your museum
- Established an effective means of communication and decision-making relating to information management.

7.2 Referring to other information policies

Although your information policy should be specific to your museum, there is no point in re-inventing the wheel. Museums have common needs and should adopt common approaches when developing an information policy.

Section 8.3 below provides some references to other organisations' information policies which you may wish to review when commencing the drafting of your own museum's policy. Universities in the UK are required to have information policies for example, and, as knowledge-based institutions they share many information management issues with museums. Management documents are not always published online and so it may be worthwhile contacting the person responsible for information management at a nearby university. Not only may they share their policy with you but you will also be developing your professional network.

A useful preparatory step before launching into the drafting of your policy is to analyse another organisation's information policy by comparing each policy statement to the London Museums Hub's Information Policy Framework. By mapping the policy to the Framework you will be able to see how the principles of information management are translated into a real-life context. This process can act as a checklist, reminding you of areas you may have overlooked; it can also be a good indicator of the level of detail you need to aim for.

7.3 Drafting, reviewing and agreeing your museum's information policy

Your museum may already have guidelines and standard formats for policy-writing. Even if this is the case, the writing frame provided in Appendix I can be used as a checklist for your information policy.

Once you have produced a draft, it is important to ensure that all the relevant staff in the museum are given the opportunity to review it and comment. Representatives of the following groups should be involved where possible:

- Senior management team
- Information management and IT specialists
- Staff responsible for implementation.

The process of obtaining feedback and comment is not only crucial in order to ensure that you have an information policy which is fit for purpose but also raises awareness and understanding of the policy and prepares staff for the implementation process.

As part of initiating the Information Policy Framework in your museum you should already have identified an appropriate group responsible for overseeing and championing information management and related policy. This group should sign off your information policy prior to submission for approval by senior management.

7.4 Maintaining and managing your museum's information policy

Once your policy is agreed you will need to ensure that it is made available to staff in the usual places, for example, departmental policy folders and your museum's intranet.

Those staff who have specific responsibilities under the policy (especially legal and ethical responsibilities) may require training sessions. More widely, staff should be briefed on the policy and have the opportunity to ask questions. If there is a regular museum-wide meeting then this may be an appropriate opportunity; alternatively you might consider booking slots in departmental meetings around the museum in order to ensure that everyone is aware of the policy and what is expected of them.

Embedded within the policy itself should be the requirement that it is reviewed on a regular basis: this should be the responsibility of the designated museum body.

Finally, be prepared to share your experiences with your peers. Although the process of developing and implementing your museum's information policy is an important step in the management of information within your museum, it is also part of a sector-wide process to improve the management of a resource which lies at the heart of museums and what they do. By informing your colleagues in other museums and sharing your work where appropriate, you will be helping the wider museum community.

Further reading and references

8

8.1 London Museums Hub resources

Information Management e-learning tool
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/IM-Tool

Information Policy Framework
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/manage_information/info_manage_museums_event

Presentations from the 'Ways Forward in Information Management for the Museum Sector'
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/manage_information/info_manage_museums_event

Records Management toolkit
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/RMToolkit

8.2 References

Davenport, Thomas and Prusak, Laurence
Working knowledge: How organisations manage what they know
Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998

Davenport, Thomas with Prusak, Laurence
Information Ecology: mastering the information and knowledge environment
London: Oxford university Press, 1997

Leonard-Barton, Dorothy
Wellsprings of knowledge
Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998

Milner, Eileen M.
Managing information and knowledge in the public sector
London: Routledge, 2000

Orna, Elizabeth
Practical Information Policies
Gower Publishing Ltd, 1999

Orna, Elizabeth
Information Strategy in practice
Gower Publishing Ltd, 2004

Prusak, Laurence (ed.)
Knowledge in Organisations
Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1997

8.3 Examples of information policies and maps

Information Policies
A number of organisations have published their information policies. Examples can be found at:

University of Hertfordshire
http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/secreg/upr/pdf/IM02-Information%20Management%20Policy-v01.0.pdf

National Archives of Scotland
http://www.nas.gov.uk/recordKeeping/informationManagementPolicy.asp

University of Virginia
http://www.hsl.virginia.edu/admin/policy/info-policy.cfm

University of York
http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/po/cmte/information/information%20access%20and%20security%20policy.rtf

Information maps
The Wikit site provides a helpful description of different types of information map at:
http://www.informationtamers.com/WikIT/index.php?title=Information_map_types

The University of Newcastle have published guidance to producing information maps for their staff at:
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/rm/Infomap.htm#figure1