

INSIDE DEVELOPMENTS OFFICES OF 5 TOP MUSEUMS



Interviews with UK Museum Development Directors

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Introduction

When it comes to wooing donors, museums are among the most successful. Total income, a significant proportion of which is in the form from grants and donations, for UK museums is £2.64bn per year, says Arts Council England.

Four years ago, The British Museum secured £10m in investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund – a record. The gift allowed the museum to finish construction of its £135m World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre.

Visitors could help unpack an ethnographic collection of 180,000 objects, while researchers could harness cutting-edge technology to broaden their professional expertise.

The example of how the museum mixed visitor engagement, tech and heritage to raise funds would interest any organization intent on soliciting donations from non-profits and the private sector.

There are similarities between fundraising in arts and education, agrees Fiona McWilliams, Director of Development, Natural History Museum. She says both rely on storytelling to inspire support through finance, advocacy and influence.

Britain has a fiscal climate that is more encouraging to charitable donors than ever before. Government tax breaks on giving helped charities raise £10.1bn last year, says Charities Aid Foundation. Most national museums are registered charities.

At the same time, public funding for universities is falling as reforms have shifted the balance of paying for higher education away from the government and onto students' shoulders. It is vital that educators invest in acquiring the skills and expertise that will enable them to raise funds from the private sector — individuals, trusts and companies.

In a competitive climate, museums offer a blueprint for an effective fundraising strategy. Places of national heritage and the arts, are among the top categories of interest to wealthy donors, says the Association of Independent Museums.

Above all else, museums have significant sentimental value to visitors. For most Brits, they conjure up feelings of nostalgia, harking visitors back to school trips to discover new solar systems, or marvel at prehistoric dinosaurs.

As this booklet details, the development offices of museums are best-in-class at harnessing this awe and turning it into financial aid.

Below are other tips from experienced, successful and interesting fundraisers for anyone hoping to lobby donors for their support.



Caroline Usher, Director of Development at The British Museum



Facts Box:

Size of development team: 12 fundraisers, plus operations and membership teams

Annual fundraising goal: Undisclosed

Annual visitors: 6m+

"The competition for charitable income is so fierce that, however good your cause, getting results can take time"

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

We have a varied portfolio. In most years, we'll fundraise for two or three major temporary exhibitions. We'll seek support for curatorial and conservation posts, and fieldwork, research, publications and digital projects. The Museum's national programme is funded for and we will usually seek funding for at least one major acquisition to add to the permanent collection. Projects for capital fundraising are spread over more than one financial year and will include care for the collection, permanent gallery displays, research facilities and public spaces in the Museum.

What are the most effective methods you have used to solicit new donations?

We attract funding from private individuals, corporate, statutory, charitable organisations and of course Membership. The effective approach varies for different sorts of funder, but there is no substitute for getting to know about a potential supporter and understanding what would be of most interest and relevance to them.

How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

I always wanted to work in the charity or not-for-profit sector. I volunteered and temped at university. A connection I made through volunteering gave me the opportunity to apply for an admin job in a small charity. Working in a small and very busy office meant that although I was the most junior person, if I had time I could take on more responsibility, and there was no shortage of opportunities to get experience of different aspects of fundraising. That got me started and I have been lucky enough to join some amazing teams.



What is a typical day like?

I am sure everyone says this but there is no such thing. Many fundraising roles involve working outside of office hours at events or visits. A day at the office may involve anything from working on a written fundraising proposal, preparing a guest list for an event, meeting supporters to planning a presentation.

What is the largest donation you've received during your time at the museum?

The British Museum is fortunate to have benefitted from large donations to capital projects such as the WCEC (World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre). We were incredibly excited to receive a grant for £10m — the result of a great team effort and something that will make a great deal of difference to the work of the Museum.

Tell us something most people don't know about museum.

Here are two!

We have been running a graduate development trainee scheme to encourage early career professionals to get involved in fundraising and development operations. And Young Friends get to go to sleep overs at the Museum — a visit with a difference!

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

Keep it simple and do it well. The competition for charitable income is so fierce that, however good your cause, getting results can take time. Over promising and under delivering can damage the credibility of a new operation. So, try to set achievable goals and build gradually on the success.



Fiona McWilliams, Director of Development, Natural History Museum



Facts Box:

Size of development team: 25

Annual fundraising goal: £14m

Annual visitors: 5m

"If you can engage and inspire all your internal audiences to become fantastic ambassadors for your organization, that's the most powerful tool in your armoury as fundraisers"

What gets you most excited about your role?

The opportunity to bring together communications and development is absolutely amazing. They work hand-in-hand. For example, we had the Duchess of Cambridge, our Patron, come in to visit some children and have a tea party. And that got us the most amazing press coverage. Because of the great coverage, we got into the public consciousness and companies that we had been trying to get on board [as donors] for a while were calling us, asking how they could become a part of it. That's communications working to the goals of the development office.

Also, we are at the leading edge of science research. We are working with world-leading experts to bring public attention to life on earth, the solar system, and what life on earth might become and our role as humans in that future. That's a pretty good reason to get up in the morning.

What is a typical day like?

There's no such thing. I might meet a donor. Or I might meet with Google about them digitizing our collections. Or I might be talking to architects. Or I might be in a meeting with our content strategy board, looking at our exhibitions and plans for the next three or four years — why is that exhibit interesting? Why will that capture the public's imagination? It's a big challenge and it is so varied — that's why I like the job.

Tell us something most people don't know about museum.

That we are both a museum and a science research institute. We have 300 people in the science group and they are in labs behind the scenes working on things as varied as food sustainability to combatting tropical diseases. People would not think the museum was running field studies in India and Africa to combat the spread of tropical diseases.

What's the most unexpected gift you've had?

We were given the rare opportunity to buy a Martian meteorite. But we didn't have the money to do it. And to get the meteorite, we had to get the money to New York on Friday and it was a Monday afternoon. Luckily, we had this really nice donor who was fascinated by space and had once wanted to be an astronaut. We said, 'You couldn't go to space so why don't we bring space to you?' He said, 'Yep, I'm up for that.' In fundraising, you never know. You should never think anything is impossible. Until you ask you don't know.

Which are your most effective fundraising activities?

I have been broadening the types of income streams the museum has, through philanthropy and corporate sponsorship. The museum has historically had major gifts through trusts and foundations, and we are well supported. But it's a competitive area. You can never rest on your laurels. You have to come up with projects that will engage and inspire trusts and foundations to want to support you.

We have a Membership Scheme and a Patron Scheme. We are launching an Annual Fund and a Legacy Program. We are exploring and developing our donor pipeline, because we have 5m visitors a year and we want to engage as many of them in our work as possible. The Annual Fund will help bring in funds to help us build up a substantial Development Fund, so when the next Martian meteorite or T-Rex comes along, we know we have the funds to be able to get it.

Likewise, with legacies. There is such an affection for this museum and occasionally, historically, people have wanted to leave us a legacy in their will. But we have been more active in explaining to people that you can make a difference by leaving us a legacy gift. We are all about legacy.

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

One of the big ones is Dippy On Tour. We've been fortunate to have been given an amazing grant, but we are looking for other trusts and foundations and individuals and corporations, to help create the most amazing educational and outreach program to support Dippy's Tour. It's all about inspiring people to get more involved in nature.

Also, we have the most amazing digitization program. We have 80m specimens here and every single one is a data store in terms of what it is, where it was collected, who found it, and in which circumstances. And if you can digitize that information and upload it, so that it can be shared with the public across the world, who knows what new understanding or discoveries there might be as a result of releasing that data.

Our Digital Vision is another big project. We have experimented with great virtual reality experiences. We brought to life a 4.5bn-year-old sea. Virtual reality is an amazing story telling device.



Do you think there are similarities between fundraising in the Arts and Education sectors?

Absolutely. It's all about being clear about your mission and vision, and inspiring your supporters to come with you on that journey to support you through their finance, advocacy and influence. That works whether you're in healthcare or arts or science or education. It really is about great storytelling and inspiring the widest group possible to help you achieve your goals.

What development tips can schools and universities learn from the UK's leading museums?

Schools and universities should engage all their staff and students so that they know all your stories; the great work that you're doing; the impact you're having on individual lives and the institution. It's a bit like a beehive: If you can engage and inspire all your internal audiences to become fantastic ambassadors for your organization, that's the most powerful tool in your armoury as fundraisers. Because we in development teams are facilitators, and if you can inspire your internal audiences, boy, you can imagine, that's effective.



Richard Nicholls, Director of Development National Museum Wales



Facts Box:

Size of development team: 8

Annual fundraising goal:
£2.2m

Annual visitors: 1.7m

"Fundraising is a team sport and you won't be able to do it on your own. You need to get the whole organisation on board"

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

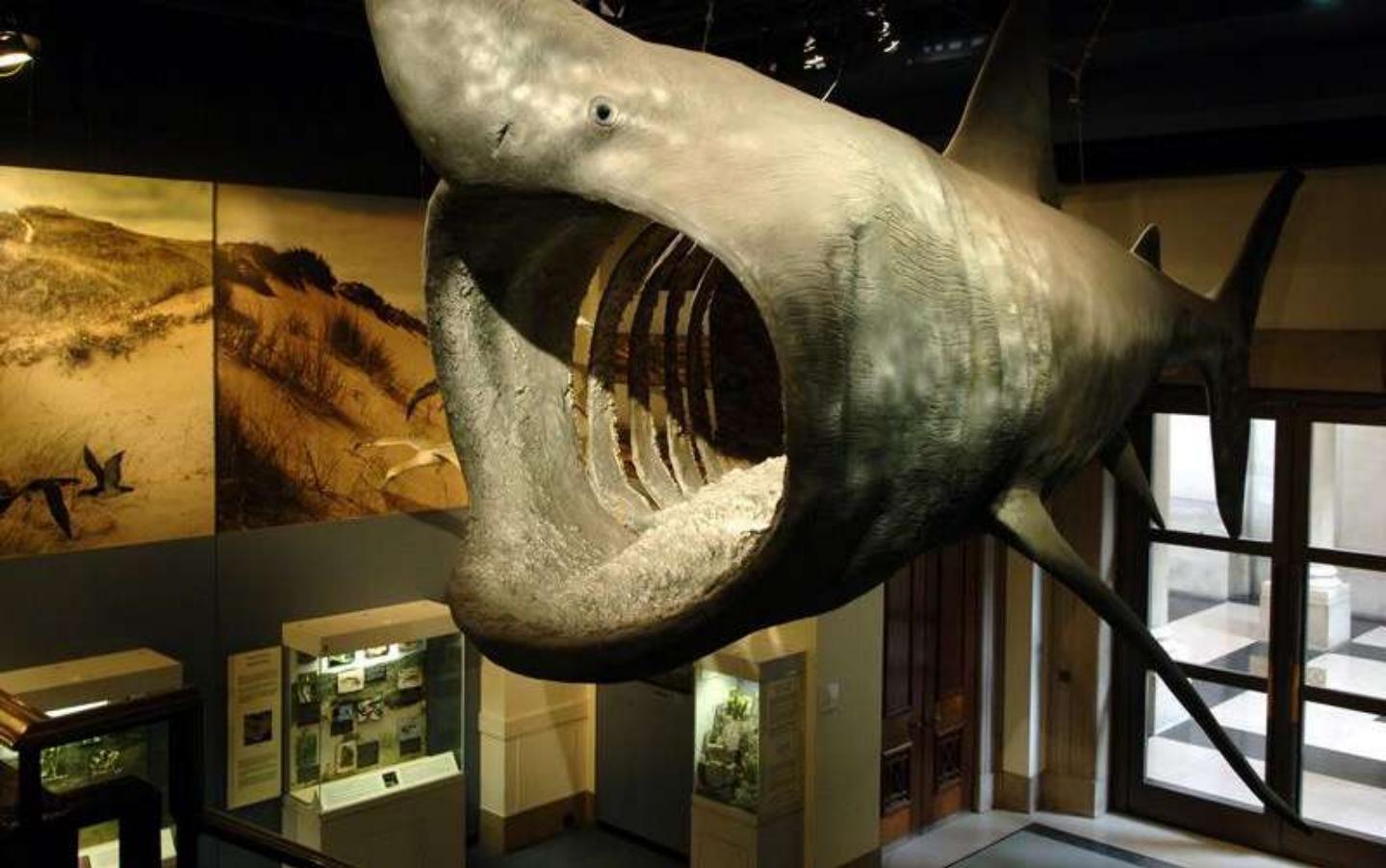
We're raising money for three aspects of our work. We have a major capital redevelopment of our open-air museum, St Fagans National History Museum, on the outskirts of Cardiff, and we're aiming to raise the balance of £1.4m outstanding. It's the biggest cultural project happening in Wales and of the £26.6m total that has gone in, we're now on the final push. We're also raising money through sponsorship for new exhibitions and our educational work, and to support us to create a digital museum whereby people can access the Museum's collections online.

What are the most effective methods you have used to solicit new donations?

Personal solicitation is important especially when you are seeking higher level funding.

How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

I was working for a small marketing agency and one of my clients was a theatre. They asked me to work for them and set up a fundraising office, and later I moved to a major university to be focussed on major gift fundraising for many years. I only recently moved back into the arts/cultural sector, when I was appointed Development Director. So, I have come full circle.



What is the largest donation you've received during your time at the museum?

I haven't been with the Museum for long, just over four months. But the largest donation I have received in my career was a gift of £2m from a major private family foundation to support a new research lab when I was working in higher education.

Gifts to the Museum come in all shapes and sizes and I have already met some incredibly generous people who I know are leaving the museum some very important and valuable items. All the items we have are held in trust to benefit our audiences.

Tell us something most people don't know about museum.

There are over 5m items in our Collection, and they range from items you can only see under a microscope to a coal mine and a stately home. And more than 200,000 school children visit our Museum in groups every year, which is more than many of the London-based national museums.

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

You need to get the whole organisation on board. Fundraising is a team sport and you won't be able to do it on your own. PR/Marketing and Communications are crucial to successful fundraising, and having the right systems and processes in place when you're administering lots of gifts is important. It's easier to keep hold of your donors than it is to find new ones.



Gwen Oakden, Co-Director of Development, The Lowry



Facts Box:

Size of development team: 8

Annual fundraising goal:
£2.2m

Annual visitors: 1.7m

"Schools should create a case for support and make it clear, persuasive and passionate. Ask for advice and use your colleagues' expertise. And don't be afraid to approach donors when the time is right"

How did you get into fundraising and development?

I very much fell into fundraising and development. After graduating from Bretton Hall with a degree in Dramaturgy, I started working at Arts & Business in an administrative role, as maternity cover and ended up staying for five years! I helped arts organisations get business support, worked on an investment scheme and loved the variety of a development role and the way relationships were at the heart of so much of it. It really spoke to me.

I then worked as a freelancer at FutureEverything and Queer-Up-North Festivals, before a six-year stint at Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester Museum and The Whitworth on all aspects of their development and fundraising. 18 months ago, I came to The Lowry as Head of Development and now I'm Co-Director of Development with my wonderful colleague Rhiannon McKay-Smith.

What is a typical day like?

That's what I love so much about my job — there is no typical day! One day I might be applying for funding to a Trust and be sat at my computer all day, the next I'm running a fundraising gala with Sir Michael Parkinson in our galleries, and the next I'm taking a major donor backstage to meet the cast of a show. A common theme is always hard work, mucking in (you'll often find me stuffing envelopes) and looking after our stakeholders, donors and supporters. We take them into the heart of what we do and take them on a journey with us, and that's what it's all about.



What methods do you use to solicit new donations?

We research like mad, use our existing supporters to help make introductions, and build really good cases for support. We have an incredibly passionate and competent board of trustees and a fantastic advisory group. Ultimately we look for synergy and seek out supporters that will be excited and inspired by the work we do. And when we find it we make sure we involve our amazing colleagues who deliver the work, including our creative team, learning and engagement team and marketing and technical teams. It really is a joint effort.

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

We'll be seeking revenue funds as always, and will be focussing on special projects in addition to that: including our YES (youth employability scheme) project, which helps young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) or at risk of being NEET; and our studio artist development scheme, which nurtures and develops talent. As well as that, we'll be looking ahead to 2018 at our next Week 53 festival and the next stage of our capital project. So, all in all, it will be a busy year ahead!

What are the largest and most surprising donations you've received during your time at the museum?

We were very lucky at The Lowry to receive a £1m donation in 2014. It was from Andrew and Zoë Law of the Law Family Charitable Foundation and was the largest private donation in the organisation's 14-year history. In recognition of their donation, we named the Main Gallery spaces, "The Andrew and Zoë Law Galleries". Andrew grew up in Greater Manchester and Zoë worked in the music industry here. They are both really keen LS Lowry collectors and the gift was a game changer for us. It was a very exciting time.

What challenges do you face?

I think all fundraisers face the same challenges — less money to go around and more people needing it. We continue to try and work creatively and find new ways of raising funds. We recently raised £12,000 working with luxury holiday company Kuoni, by raffling a holiday to Mauritius, alongside their support of our international theatre programme. It was a first for us and indicative of us trying to think outside the box.

Do you attend conferences or network with development professionals at other museums?

I do, and Rhiannon and our team do too. It's always incredibly useful! We are part of the North West Development Forum, ran by and for development professionals, and we attend conferences and roundtable discussions. I've always thought we are more effective when we work together and the development scene in the North West is very supportive and collaborative — we look out for each other.

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

Create a case for support and make it clear, persuasive and passionate. Know why you are asking for support! Ask for advice and use your colleagues' expertise. And don't be afraid to approach donors when the time is right.



Jane Franklin, Director of Development, Jewish Museum London



“As an organisation, we’re very proud to be able to tackle prejudice and discrimination before it starts — but we have to continue to raise the funds to make this possible”

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

In 2017 the Jewish Museum London has some really exciting exhibitions to look forward to — including Amy Winehouse: A Family Portrait, which returns to its Camden home having toured internationally over the past four years; Designs on Britain, which tells the story of émigré Jewish designers who fled Nazism in Europe, and their contributions to the teaching and practice of design in Britain; and Sephardi Voices, an exhibition of photography and sound that will immerse visitors in the lost worlds of Jewish communities in the middle east.

As an organisation, we need to fundraise to deliver these exhibitions — and the ambitious public events programmes that are delivered alongside them — to ensure they are accessible to the widest possible audiences. We also need to ensure the funds are raised for the museum’s learning programmes, across all ages, formal (schools) and informal (everything else). As an organisation, we’re very proud to be able to tackle prejudice and discrimination through these programmes before it starts, but we do have to continue to raise the funds to make this possible. As the Jewish Museum doesn’t receive any regular statutory funding, we are totally reliant on the generous support of our committed funders and donors.

Facts Box:

Size of development team: 3

Annual fundraising goal:
£1,8m

Annual visitors: 40,000



How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

I came through an arts route, studying a BA at Camberwell College of Arts before an MA in Museums Management at Birkbeck, and it was contributing to big European and UK statutory funding applications back in the mid-2000s that whetted my appetite for fundraising. Once I saw what could be achieved with a determined approach to organisational fundraising, I knew this was where I wanted to make my career.

Fundraising and development can be an incredibly creative area to work in, and you also get to play a pivotal role in helping to realise an organisation's vision.

What is a typical day like?

A typical day will include some planning work, perhaps a strategy meeting, and generally a lot of communication with other departments — this could be with our marketing and communications team about data management or with the learning team to input into a funding application. And then there is communication with our donors. From one-to-one meetings, to updates on our latest projects and plans, through to emails and calls to set up meetings and engagement opportunities, or hand-written notes and phone calls to personally thank donors, working in development is all about relationships.

What is the largest donation you've received during your time at the museum?

In terms of the solicitation of donations over the past few months, we've been successful with several five-figure asks and have also submitted applications or received pledges for a couple of six-figure gifts.

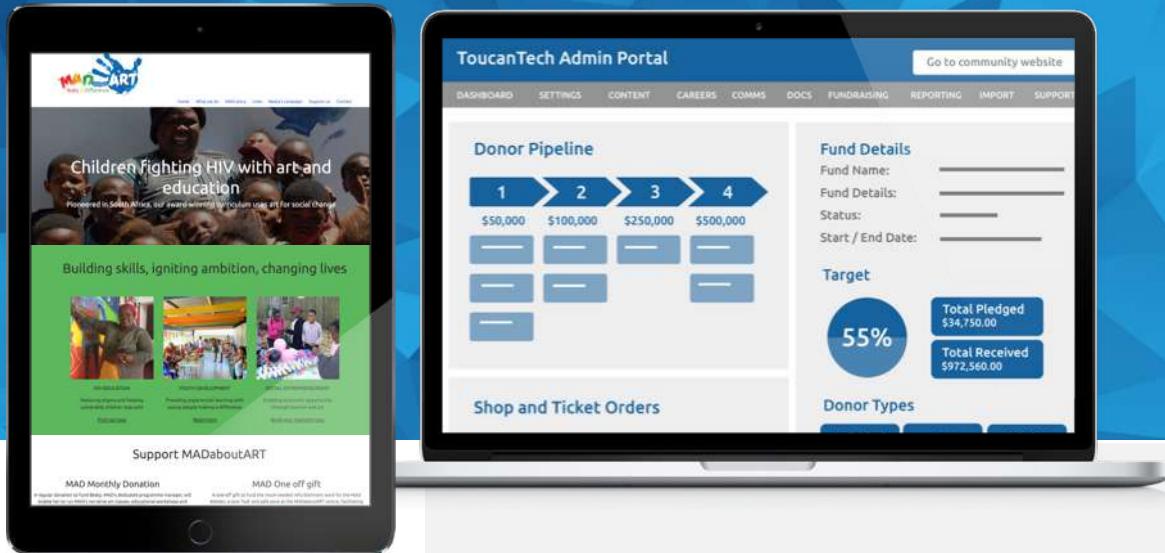
Tell us something most people don't know about museum.

It's not just for Jewish audiences. Our temporary exhibitions explore the work and lives of some incredible artists, creative figures and movements from a new perspective. We often say 'through a Jewish lens'. From exhibitions on Judith Kerr (author of the Tiger Who Came to Tea, and many other excellent books) to the upcoming Designs on Britain, the exhibitions vary widely and provide many opportunities for new visitors to discover the museum. Also, we're only a few minutes' walk from Camden Town tube station, and very near to Regent's Park. So, it's a great location!

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

Play to your organisational strengths so that your focus is on the right kind of fundraising for your cause, and makes use of the resources and skill-sets you have available. Also, get your Board of Trustees, and other senior volunteers, supportive and giving!

Community Management Software + Powerful Fundraising Platform



What is ToucanTech?

ToucanTech is a cloud-based community website and database software used by charities & not-for-profits, companies and schools to grow, manage and support their communities.

In one simple, beautiful system we give institutions the power to manage all communications, admin and data in one place. Synced with social media and combining a CRM, analytics, email, payments, news, mentoring and more, it's a flexible solution at an affordable price.

ToucanTech is trusted by hundreds of customers across the globe, managing communities of thousands of people and tracking millions in fundraising donations.

The ToucanTech modular platform allows charities to choose the components they need to cost effectively manage their community events and collect donations through our easy to use interface.

Don't just take our word for it...

MADaboutART, teaches South African township children (through art classes) how to protect themselves from HIV. MAD's new ToucanTech system has enabled them to start running a regular giving campaign to double their donation income.

"It's a game-changing system for us – easy to use and looks great – as a small charity we're so grateful to have access to this type of software"

Liz Brown
Director
MADaboutART



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