

UMIS progress

Sept 2020 – July 2021



Sharing knowledge

UMIS has continued, over the past year, its role as a valued and respected contributor to the development of ideas, expertise and projects within the cultural sector.

Case studies for the sector

Throughout the reporting period, UMIS members contributed case studies and information to key knowledge sharing projects.

- **Museums Galleries Scotland's (MGS)** 'Museums Learning Resources to Support Home Learning during Covid 19'
<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-guidance-for-museums/museum-learning-resources-to-support-home-schooling-during-covid-19/>
- MGS 'Online Collections & Resources'
<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-guidance-for-museums/online-collections-and-resources/>
- **Museums Association's** 'Museums Change Lives Scotland' publication (not yet published, but the Wales & Northern Ireland editions can be found here
<https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/in-the-nations/>)
- MGS 'Audiences & Communities' case studies
<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/case-studies/>

MGS partnership event

In February the UMIS Coordinator, along with the Coordinator for **Industrial Museums in Scotland** delivered a session for museums, chaired by the **Scottish Museums Federation**, as part of MGS's *Talking Partnerships* series. The session – entitled *Partnerships for Resilience* – explored how partnerships can strengthen organisations by sharing experiences, pooling resources and amplifying advocacy and was attended by 32 heritage and cultural professionals. The resulting blog was published on the Museums Galleries Scotland website, giving tips on running a successful museums partnership.

<https://museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/blog/top-ten-tips-for-a-successful-museum-partnership/>

Cultural Current: webinars with our Russian colleagues

Earlier in 2021, UMIS co-developed an International online exchange programme, in the form of a series of webinars, with the university museums community in Russia. The programme was developed with the support of the **Department of Culture and Education of the British Embassy in Moscow** as part of the broader UK-Russia Creative Bridge 2020-21. The exchange was organised by **Tomsk Polytechnic University, Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Perm State National Research University** and UMIS.

In total we delivered 10 sessions as part of the 18-hour programme of knowledge exchange covering topics such as:

- Developing a professional university museum community
- Embedding collections in university strategic priorities
- Academic engagement
- Developing a new museum
- Using collections in teaching
- Developing exhibition and collections projects (both on and offline)
- Working with communities, volunteers, students and under-represented groups

Information and the presentations can be found here>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/culturalcurrent2021/>

Further international collaboration

In June, UMIS delivered a session to **the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)** conference, due to have been held in Scotland prior to the pandemic. Now online, the conference session gave an overview of the university museums in Scotland and their work, as part of the 'Taste of Scotland' timetable.

https://events.qaa.ac.uk/qaaevents/frontend/reg/tAgendaWebsite.csp?pageID=117574&ef_sel_menu=2011&eventID=339&mode=

UMIS also contributed to the Universeum AGM – the European network for academic heritage (<https://www.universeum-network.eu/>) and to the University Museums Group AGM – UMIS's sibling organisation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

UMIS working together

The practical value of knowledge exchange within the UMIS partnership continued to help the members over the reporting period, with discussions centring around:

- The implications of physical distancing on reopening
- Friends groups
- Technology and software
- Online exhibitions
- Hybrid/blended teaching
- VAT 33A
- Training
- Potential future projects
- Other Covid-related operations and implications

In addition, the UMIS Coordinator is providing direct **training for student volunteers** from the University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections on how best to use social media. The session will cover the importance and place of social media in modern marketing, how it works within broader communications planning and how to use the channels professionally.

Leadership & advocacy

During the reporting period, UMIS further developed its role as a key representative body within the Scottish and UK museums sector.

Sector strategic development & representation

UMIS continues to be part of the **MGS Stakeholder Group** – the group tasked with helping to advise on strategic activity for the sector in Scotland. As part of this group we have this year fed in to consultations around the new National Strategy for Scotland’s Museums (currently in development), the implications of Brexit on the museums sector, and responses to the Scottish Government on cultural policy and the potential Culture Act.

The UMIS partnership also sits on the **Museums Association Scottish Stakeholder Group**, which represents the interests of the Scottish museums sector to the UK body for museums. As part of this group we have fed in to a joint sector statement on the risks posed by Covid to Scotland’s museums (<https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/advocacy/covid-19/scotlands-museums-at-risk-due-to-covid-19/>) and the Scottish museums manifesto (<https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/advocacy/a-manifesto-for-museums-in-scotland/>) laying out key priorities for the new Scottish Government post-election.

National Partnership for Culture (NPC) workshops

UMIS has been invited, as a ‘key external expert’ to take part in the **Scottish Government’s NPC workshops**, exploring agreed priorities and proposed actions for the Scottish cultural sector within priority areas. The next workshop, on education (including skills) is to take place in July, and UMIS has also shared its views with the Scottish Government on the outcome of their workshop on Wellbeing (particularly mental health).

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-partnership-for-culture-work-programme---2021/>

Culture, health & wellbeing

Creating Wellbeing conference 2021

UMIS held its conference – this year entitled *Creating Wellbeing* on 3 June this year. The conference, which explored the emerging picture of the positive impact that engaging with the arts, culture and creativity can have on physical and mental health and general wellbeing, attracted 110 delegates from 17 countries. 21 experts in the field and experienced creative practitioners delivered 16 sessions on the day, which was also supported by four student volunteers. See an infographic of a brief evaluation on the next page.

Creating Wellbeing

UMIS conference 2021

UMIS

University Museum
in Scotland

... Exploring the emerging picture of the positive impact of arts, culture & creativity on physical and mental health and wellbeing...

21 speakers
16 sessions



19

organisations

Approx.

38

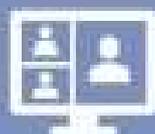
student
volunteering hours



110 delegates

17 countries

On average,
delegates joined for
4 hours



45%

of delegates
attended the
whole event

#

UMISconf2021
CreatingWellbeing



37 UMIS tweets

38,636 impressions

660 engagements

To 22 June:

69 views

10 downloads



[https://](https://umismatingwellbeing.wordpress.com/conference-recording/)

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ing.wordpress.com/
conference-
recording/

Decolonisation & repatriation

Decolonisation is defined by the Museums Association as ‘a long-term process that seeks to recognise the integral role of empire in British **museums** – from their creation to the present day’.

Empire, Slavery & Scotland’s Museums

UMIS representatives sit on the expert Steering Group of the **Empire, Slavery & Scotland’s Museums (ESSM) project**. The project, led by **MGS** and sponsored by the **Scottish Government**, will explore how the story of Scotland’s involvement in the British Empire, colonialism, and transatlantic slavery, should be told using museum collections, and will explore the mechanisms of how Scotland can confront challenging histories within museum spaces.

<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/projects/empire-slavery-scotlands-museums/>

Working with industry partners

University museums are considered at the forefront of Scotland’s work on decolonisation, restitution and repatriation. **National Museums Scotland** is currently working with UMIS members to share insight and knowledge into existing and best practice, contemporary thinking and experiences around decolonisation and repatriation, in order to share this more broadly and develop a sector-wide picture.

Repatriation of Benin bronze

Earlier this year, UMIS member the **University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections** became the first museum to actively agree the unconditional repatriation of a Benin bronze - a sculpture looted by British soldiers in Nigeria in one of the most notorious examples of the pillaging of cultural treasures associated with 19th century European colonial expansion. The University museums have previous experience of returning sacred items and ancestral remains to Canada, Australia and New Zealand and are acknowledged to have a well-established, transparent process for managing requests for restitution.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/14790/#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Aberdeen%20is,19th%20century%20European%20colonial%20expansion.>

Leading sector practice

The Hunterian’s *Curating Discomfort* project, funded through Museums Galleries Scotland, seeks to look at ways outside of traditional museum authority to explore the interpretation of contested collections and to design and deliver a series of museum interventions that takes the museum out of the institutional comfort zone. The project ultimately aims to re-write an historically ‘comfortable’ narrative that omits Scotland’s direct involvement in slavery and colonialism to reveal a more truthful rendering of the past.

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/about/achangingmuseum/>

The collections of the D’Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum were largely acquired during the colonial era. Although D’Arcy Thompson himself wasn’t a trophy hunter, it’s known that he acquired specimens from those that were. The **University of Dundee Museums** is currently

working on a project to **decolonise the D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum**, researching the stories behind their specimens – some of which are now extinct or endangered due to colonial activity – to find new ways to interpret them. As part of the project, the museum ran a webinar attended by an international audience -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzowgJgj7gl>

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/collections/zoology/decolonising/>

The **Museums of the University of St Andrews** is currently working on its **Re:Collecting Empire** project, aiming to identify and raise awareness of the missing stories within their collections and exploring which actions need to be taken to address this. The museums service will examine and re-tell the narratives linked to their collections with a diverse set of audiences, giving a voice to different communities through events, workshops and associated programming, and ultimately re-interpreting their collections from a multi-dimensional perspective.

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/museums/collections/>

Engagement & widening access

Arts Award

The **Capturing Lives** project, run by UMIS in 2020 and resulting in an Arts Award Explore qualification for participants proved highly effective, and the involvement of student mentors certainly contributed to its success. UMIS was delighted when the mentors were shortlisted – and ultimately gained a ‘Highly Commended’ - for the **Museums & Heritage Awards Volunteers of the Year** – one of only four Scottish organisations to be shortlisted for an award.

<https://awards.museumsandheritage.com/shortlist-2021/>

Following on from the success of the *Capturing Lives*, UMIS members this year ran the **Power of Public Art** programme to progress participants to an Arts Award Bronze award. As with the programme last year, the *Power of Public Art* was aimed at 11-18 year olds – particularly those from a Widening Participation backgrounds - and involved student mentors to take them through the eight week online course. Run by the University of Edinburgh Museums and the University of Stirling Art Collection, in partnership with the Edinburgh Art Festival, the programme also utilised the collections of the University of Dundee. The results of the project speak for themselves:

- 80 young people took part, 50% from Widening Participation backgrounds and 28 of whom had also taken part in *Capturing Lives*
- 58 participants gained an Arts Award Bronze qualification
- 94% stated it had made them more likely to visit the campuses in future to visit the museums and art collections
- 57% reported they would be more likely to apply to university following the programme
- 100% expressed an interest in progressing to do an Arts Award Silver/Gold qualification

UMIS is planning to develop programming to progress the young people to the Silver/Gold qualification later this year.

'I personally really enjoyed the program. Having completed the Arts Award Explore last year, I was excited to participate in the Bronze Award. I learned so much about different styles of Art and how they convey different messages. I liked the involvement with museums and universities. I liked all the mentors who shared their insights. I can't wait to do the Silver! Thank you for a great experience that's well worth doing.' – Sol, 16.

<https://sites.google.com/view/bronze-award-2021/home>

Online engagement

UMIS has continued to grow its presence on Twitter with involvement in campaigns such as **#MuseumWeek #IMD2021 #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek #OnlineArtExchange** and linking in to the more general museums campaigns of **#MuseumFromHome #MuseumsAreGo** and **#BackToMuseums**.

Since 1 October 2020, we have **grown our followers by 25%** (to 980) and have achieved **164,400** tweet impressions.

<https://twitter.com/UniMuseumsScot>

Opening of the Wardlaw Museum, University of St Andrews

Having closed in 2018 for a £2.1m redevelopment (of which £1.3m was raised from philanthropic donations) the new Wardlaw Museum at the University of St Andrews was due to open in April 2020. However, this opening date was delayed due to the pandemic.

The museum was finally able to open to the public on 26 June and forms a new, exciting cultural venue at the heart of St Andrew's cultural quarter. Named after the University's founder and first Chancellor, Bishop Henry Wardlaw, the refurbished and redeveloped museum will offer a broader selection of displays, improved visitor facilities and an exciting programme of temporary exhibitions and activities.

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/museums/>

Learning, Teaching & Research

AHRC Covid 19 urgency funding

Last year, UMIS successfully secured funding from the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Covid-19 Urgency Scheme to track and evaluate the capacity, capabilities and best practice in digital teaching with collections, with the ultimate aim of developing models to ensure greater uptake in, and satisfaction with, online teaching. The *Online teaching and learning with digitised collections in Higher Education contexts* project is currently underway and is due for completion in November 2021.

So far, we have shared the project in the following forums:

- 5th Connected Communities Heritage Network Symposium (<http://www.findglocal.com/GB/Leicester/416568315106015/Connected-Communities-Heritage-Network>)
- Pandemic and Beyond, Cultural Industries and Creative Practice Knowledge Exchange Workshop (<https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/projects/arts-culture-and-the-creative-industries/#Cultural-Industries-and-Creative-Practice>)
- DCDC21 workshop: 'Online teaching and learning with digitised collections in Higher Education contexts' (<https://pheedloop.com/dcdc21/site/sessions/?id=SES91OG88E7PEO7M5>)
- A piece in the International Council of Museums (ICOM) website through their #ICOMvoices series (<https://icom.museum/en/news/online-learning-teaching-digitised-collections/>)
- UMIS has also submitted a paper to the UMAC/Universeum international conference taking place in September

The involvement of multiple UMIS members, as well as having UMIS as a partner in the project, has enabled the team to achieve more than any one partner could have done on their own.

The second and third surveys, gathering intelligence from UMIS member teams and from the UK and university sector more broadly, are currently live, and the project is being promoted via Twitter (#CollectionTeaching) and more broadly.

<https://collectionteaching.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

AHRC Heritage Science Infrastructure for Research discussions

With acknowledgement of the university museums' role as highly important and valued global research assets, UMIS is currently taking part in discussions around establishing a UK Heritage Science Infrastructure for Research, led by the **AHRC** and colleagues from **National Museums Scotland**,

Ultimately, the consultation aims to build a joint strategy and infrastructure within Heritage Science Research for Scotland and beyond.

The first of the consultations involved UMIS members, **National Museums Scotland**, **National Galleries of Scotland**, **National Libraries Scotland**, **Historic Environment Scotland** and **Museums Galleries Scotland**.

Funding

MGS Covid 19 Museum Development Fund

UMIS reported last year that, following our involvement in a letter to the Scottish Government, liaison with Museums Galleries Scotland and a press campaign for **funding for civic and university museums**, that MGS announced a dedicated grant stream in October. Following this announcement, and thanks to MGS's continued liaison with the Scottish Government, further funding was announced in December, with £100,000 specifically ringfenced for university museums.

Distributed as the MGS Covid 19 Museum Development Fund grants, the funding was to 'deliver projects to help build resilience and address the challenges brought on by the Covid pandemic. Six UMIS members went on to secure a total of almost **£200,000** through the fund for seven projects.

'Top up' funding for UMIS Coordinator position

Given the timescale of the review of the Museums, Galleries and Collections grant by the Scottish Funding Council, UMIS sought to ensure it maintained the increased partnership working, advocacy and visibility we have worked so hard to achieve since the Coordinator was recruited while the review was ongoing.

MGS, who provided the initial match funding for the Coordinator role, has provided UMIS with a 'Top Up' grant to ensure the **Coordinator stays in post until the end of the 2021/22 academic year.**

Awarding this continued funding to an existing project is not normally within the scope of MGS's grant programmes, and is a true endorsement of both the Coordinator and of the work and value of the university museums in Scotland.

AHRC Capabilities for Collections (CapCo) fund

Three UMIS members secured funding earlier in the year through the AHRC's CapCo funding aimed at supporting a series of targeted, capital investments to renew and upgrade research facilities within UK galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs), including university collections, focusing on conservation and heritage science facilities, digital capture equipment and specialist study spaces and reading rooms. The recipients were:

- University of Stirling Art Collection: c. £200,000
- University of Dundee Museums: c. £250,000
- The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: c. £400,000

Find information the [AHRC website](#)

Governance & strategic planning

Brand & website

Having completed the UMIS organisational review of identity in 2020, and having secured funding of £9,000 from MGS to develop and update our visual identity and website, UMIS's new logo (seen in this document) was delivered in May.

At the same time, UMIS is working with a designer/developer to produce a new website which will be more public facing and streamlined and provide us with an appropriate 'shop window' for the 21st century.

Both the website and the logo will be officially launched in mid-late August 2021.

Annual General Meeting

UMIS held its Annual General Meeting in January this year in which two new officials were elected.

Jacky MacBeath, Head of Museums at the University of Edinburgh stepped down as Convenor. Jessica Burdge, Head of Collections at the University of St Andrews was voted into the role.

Mungo Campbell, Deputy Director of The Hunterian stepped down as Treasurer. Susan Curran, Curator of Learning & Outreach at the University of Aberdeen was voted in.

There will be a period of handover while the new officials take up their duties.

Forward plan

At the beginning of 2021, UMIS revisited its Strategic and Forward Plan. The Strategic Plan was due to be reviewed in Summer 2021, but given the review period of the Museums, Galleries and Collections grant, and the likelihood of a change to the grant recommendations, coupled with the current review of the National Strategy for Scotland's Museums and Galleries by MGS, it was decided that strategic planning should be put on hold until the landscape and the work of stakeholders offers more clarity.

UMIS did, however, have discussions around future areas of work, and these will be worked on over the summer in order to provide a more comprehensive and concrete set of priorities and projects over the coming three years.

UMIS/MGS survey

To give an indication of the impact of Covid on Scotland's university museums, UMIS worked with MGS to compile a survey to be sent out to each UMIS member at the end of 2020. This provided a picture of the challenges and expectations of our museums and can be used as a baseline for future measurement of impact of the pandemic in the sector.

For further information:

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