



V&A Working Nationally: Objectives and Priorities 2014-2017

June 2014

A. Background:

The V&A has long had a national remit. The Museum was born out of the national network of design schools and it was the first to have a 'circulation department' which, from 1853 to 1976, loaned objects and exhibitions to art galleries, museums, art schools and education colleges, disseminating art and design on a major scale throughout the UK¹.

The Museum continues to work hard to share collections: in 2013-14, the Museum loaned 467 objects to 85 venues, with an additional 1,715 objects on long-term loan to over 163 venues around the country and 10 V&A touring exhibitions travelled to 22 venues across the UK, seen by over 580,000 people. It continues to work in partnership with museums, local authorities, universities and schools, charities, community groups and creative practitioners to share knowledge, skills and promote access to the collections. In just one example of the service the Museum provides, since March 2013, curators have offered formal advice to Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund on the heritage merit and value of nearly 1,500 objects.

Given reduced public funding for museums and concern about the cultural offer outside London, it is time to take a more strategic approach to the V&A's national activity, focussed on the objectives and guided by the principles set out below.

B. Objectives:

1. **Audiences:** To make the V&A's knowledge and collections accessible across the UK.
2. **Sector:** To share expertise and collections with museums across the UK.

¹ The 7th Annual Report (1860) states that the 'Circulating Museum', consisting of 820 objects, plus display cases, all transported on a specially constructed rail carriage, had been shown in 26 places in the past three years and visited by 306,387 people. And in 1873 alone, the V&A loaned around 10,000 objects across the UK.

C. Principles:

- Working in partnership with national museums and funding bodies, as well as regional and independent museums;
- Amplified communication of the Museum's national activity, including across the sector and Whitehall;
- An emphasis on quality of engagement rather than simply numbers of interactions;
- Positioning the Museum as a sector leader: the V&A should play a more prominent and leading role in supporting the dissemination of national museum expertise and collections across the UK.

D. Priorities for 2014-17:

Headline:

V&A Museum of Design, Dundee:

In 2012 the V&A and Design Dundee Limited (a partnership between the V&A, Dundee Council, the Universities of Dundee and Abertay Dundee and Scottish Enterprise) signed a 25-year partnership agreement outlining the V&A's commitment to the first ever purpose built design museum to be constructed in the UK outside London. V&A Dundee aims to transform people's awareness of design - especially of Scotland's international history of design innovation - and to inspire creativity and enterprise. It forms a key part of the V&A's long term commitment to broaden access to collections and exhibitions. The V&A's contribution includes substantial advice and guidance, loans and exhibitions. V&A Dundee itself will have a national role in Scotland and through this work will extend and deepen the V&A's reach.

Project lead: Design Dundee Limited

New for 2014-17:

V&A partnership with Museums Sheffield:

The V&A has had a formal partnership with Museums Sheffield since 1999, with an initial focus on the development of the Millennium Galleries. The V&A and Museums Sheffield are currently developing a new 3-5 year partnership agreement to include loans, skills sharing, advice for gallery redevelopment and possible joint programming.

Project lead: National

V&A Art Fund Photography Curators Training Programme:

The V&A, with the support of the Art Fund and in partnership with national and regional partners, will run a 2-year programme to develop photography curatorial skills in the UK museum sector starting in 2014.

Project lead: National

Ongoing:

ACE/V&A Purchase Grant Fund:

The V&A manages the Purchase Grant Fund with a grants budget from Arts Council England (£750,000 in 2014/15). The V&A engages with over 100 different organisations throughout England and Wales each year, via the Fund.

Project lead: National

Museums and Schools Programme:

The V&A Learning Department is working with Coventry Transport Museum and the Herbert Museum and Art Gallery on a joint schools programme to increase the number of schools pupils visiting museums. It is part of the Museums and Schools Programme, funded by the Department of Education via Arts Council England. The Learning Department is also working with a consortium of 9 museums in east Lancashire as part of this scheme.

Project lead: Learning

Touring Exhibitions:

The V&A creates exhibitions for touring to share collections and work effectively with partners to engage and inspire new audiences. The aim is to tour 5 exhibitions across the UK at any one time. It is a fee charging programme, but venues benefit from a V&A subsidy to support the Museum's commitment to sharing collections across the regions. The Museum aims to make its exhibitions affordable and include support on delivery, installation and marketing.

Project lead: Exhibitions, Museum of Childhood, Theatre and Performance

Loans:

The V&A engages with partners across the UK to support and enable short and long term loans of our objects wherever and whenever possible. Long term loans underpin many of our relations with other museums; for example, that of musical instrument to the Horniman Museum and of furniture to Sewerby Hall, Bridlington. The Museum aims to make V&A national loans as affordable and straightforward as possible.

Project lead: Loans

Research:

The V&A works closely with universities and higher education bodies across the UK to develop and share knowledge of the collections. Partners include the universities of the West of England, Brighton, Sussex, York and Glasgow, through research fellowships and collaborative doctoral projects. The V&A is the named external partner for 6 of the UK's 18

Doctoral Training Partnership consortia (involving over 1,000 students over the next five years) and host the national administration for the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (more than 50 studentships each year). The V&A also is home to the world's oldest postgraduate programme in the history of design, which forms part of our longstanding collaboration with the Royal College of Art.

Project lead: Research

Relationships with regional museums:

In addition to more formal relationships with Museums Sheffield and Coventry Museums, the V&A works collaboratively with institutions with shared interests across the UK, including the Potteries Museum, Stoke, Blackpool Council, Lakeland Arts and the National Trust. These partners will all be invited to the V&A partners' event. V&A staff act as trustees on a number of boards, for example Chevening House, the Higgins, Bedford and the Emery Walker Trust.

Project lead: National

Relationships with national museums:

The V&A works with other national museums to make our collections and expertise as accessible as widely as possible, including via the National Museums Directors' Council and collections focussed partnerships with Tate and the British Museum.

Project lead: National

Subject Specialist Networks:

V&A staff play a leading role in several subject specialist networks supported by Arts Council England: the Association of Performing Arts Collections, the Dress and Textile Specialists, Posters and the Islamic network.

Project leads: Furniture, Textiles and Fashion; Theatre and Performance; Word and Image; Asia

Hospitals Programme:

Supported by the Friends of the V&A, the Museum of Childhood provides educational sessions in hospitals, including object handling. The Word and Image Department continues to work with the charity *Paintings in Hospitals* to co-curate small scale exhibitions of prints for display in hospitals.

Project lead: Museum of Childhood, Word and Image

Expert Advice:

V&A staff provide formal expert advice to Government, funding bodies and others, including the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, as part of the

Museum's national role. This includes assessing export licences, championing objects through the export licence system, and the Acceptance-in-Lieu, Conditional Exemption and Government Indemnity schemes. Additionally, staff from Collections, Learning, Conservation, Marketing, Development and Visitor Services share their knowledge and expertise with professional colleagues in UK organisations on a wide range of topics from object enquiries and fundraising to working internationally and conservation.

Project lead: National

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