



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Library Service Research Paper

February 2011

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Assessing the value and impact of museums

NIAR 23-11

This paper sets out a summary of recent attempts to assess the impact and value of museums across the UK and Ireland. Both economic and social impacts are considered, and the methodologies adopted by such assessments are discussed. Two case studies are used to highlight how economic and social impacts can be assessed in practice, and the lessons learned from each exercise are described.

Paper 29/11

7 February 2011

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Key Points

- The last concerted attempt to calculate the economic impact of museums in Northern Ireland took place in 2003.
- A DCAL-commissioned study in 2008 attempted to construct a model by which the social and economic value of public libraries, museums, arts and sport in Northern Ireland could be understood. However, this model was never progressed due to a lack of suitable data.
- Since at least 2005, museums bodies in England and Scotland have sought to establish a consistent methodology by which to measure and demonstrate both the economic and the social value of museums.
- The key techniques discussed for economic impact and valuation have included:
 - **Cost-benefit analysis**
 - **Multiplier analysis**
 - **Contingent valuation**
 - **Social Return on Investment**
- The Social Return on Investment model has been favoured in England, and a number of case studies exist which demonstrate how it can be used.
- In 2010, the Association of Independent Museums created an economic value toolkit which sets out a method to estimate the economic impact museums may have on their local economy, via a multiplier analysis.
- Measuring the social value of museums is more challenging, but significant advances have been made in this field in recent years.
- Various categories of social impact have been defined, and case studies exist to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- A case study from Tyne and Wear Museums illustrates the importance of defining the desired social impact, and the methodology to be used in assessing the outcome, at an early stage in any new project or programme.
- Other forms of value and impact are also summarised briefly, including cultural heritage tourism, educational and cultural factors.
- It is concluded that although a methodology for educational impact is now well-established, measuring cultural impact is in its infancy and will require further development before empirical measures can be applied in practice.

Executive Summary

This paper sets out a summary of recent attempts to assess the impact and value of museums across the UK and Ireland. Both economic and social impacts are considered, and the methodologies adopted by such assessments are discussed. Two case studies are used to highlight how economic and social impacts can be assessed in practice, and the lessons learned from each exercise.

The last concerted attempt to calculate the economic impact of museums in Northern Ireland took place in 2003. A DCAL-commissioned study in 2008 then attempted to construct a model by which the social and economic value of public libraries, museums, arts and sport in Northern Ireland could be understood. However, this model was never progressed. This contrasts with the situation elsewhere. Since at least 2005, museums bodies in England and Scotland have sought to establish a consistent methodology by which to measure and demonstrate both the economic and the social value of museums.

The key techniques discussed have included:

Method	Description	Assessment
Cost-benefit analysis	Identifies and analyses impacts in monetary terms and establishes whether benefits outweigh costs.	More often used as a decision-making tool than to demonstrate impacts after the event.
Multiplier analysis	Demonstrates the Gross Value Added (GVA) impacts on the local and wider economy.	Effective at illustrating 'trickle down' effects, but fails to capture broad range of social, cultural and educational benefits.
Contingent valuation	Asks users to place a value on the service offered.	Indicates value of a service, rather than just the economic impact. Difficulties in defining non-users, and in defining value ranges.
Social return on investment (SROI)	Combines multiplier analysis and contingent valuation to indicate both impact and value.	Offers flexibility in providing a range of indicators; can be used to monitor changes in impact of a museum through time.

The SROI model has been favoured in England, and a number of case studies exist which demonstrate how it can be used. In 2010, the Association of Independent Museums created an economic value toolkit which sets out a method to estimate the economic impact museums may have on their local economy, via a multiplier analysis.

Measuring the social value of museums is more challenging, but significant advances have been made in this field in recent years. Various categories of social impact have been defined, and case studies exist to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

A case study from Tyne and Wear Museums illustrates the importance of defining the desired social impact, and the methodology to be used in assessing the outcome, at an early stage in any new project or programme.

Other forms of value and impact are also summarised briefly, including cultural heritage tourism, educational and cultural factors. It is concluded that although a methodology for educational impact is now well-established, measuring cultural impact is in its infancy and will require further development before empirical measures can be applied in practice.

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1 Work conducted so far

There is a growing recognition in the museums sector that both demonstrating and monitoring the economic impact of their existence is necessary in a time of intense pressure on public funding. To a degree, there is also an awareness of the advantages of demonstrating the social value of museums. Almost ten years ago, one analyst concluded that,

A signal weakness of the museums sector has been its inability to provide data to support the claims made about it...many of the statistics we have on museums are incomplete or inaccurate¹.

Furthermore, there were frustrations that any data collected was done so in a way which did not allow for consistent comparability from region to region:

The data that exist tend to quantify what can be quantified, rather than providing answers to questions that need addressing. There are no dedicated, fully reliable, comprehensive year-on-year data. There is little comparability between existing data, which have been gathered in different ways, use different reporting periods, so they cannot be aggregated².

However, over the last decade, a large amount of work has taken place to form and test appropriate, flexible and effective methodologies to indicate the impact and value of museums. The following is a brief review of the work undertaken in recent years by each of the regions of the UK, and Ireland.

(a) Northern Ireland

The only tailor-made review of the economic impact of museums in Northern Ireland was conducted in 2003 by Price Waterhouse Coopers, commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund and with guidance from Northern Ireland Museums Council.³ This review sought to illustrate the contribution museums make to the economic life of Northern Ireland, but also to develop an understanding in the sector of the importance of demonstrating this contribution. The methodology adopted was essentially a multiplier analysis which calculated not only the revenue generated directly by the museum in terms of entrance fees, food and drink, but also the wider effects of direct and indirect employment. The study also involved consultation with key stakeholders, and the resulting report presented both figures for the economic impact of the whole sector,

¹ Selwood, S. 2002. What difference do museums make? Producing evidence on the impact of museums. *Critical Quarterly*. 44 (4): p68.

² Selwood, S. 2002. What difference do museums make? Producing evidence on the impact of museums. *Critical Quarterly*. 44 (4): p69; see also the points raised in Johnson, P & Thomas, B. 2000. *The Economic Impact of Museums: A critique*. University of Durham Business School.

³ Price Waterhouse Coopers. 2003. *An Initial Review of the Economic Impact of Museums in Northern Ireland: Final Report*. Heritage Lottery Fund.

and three specific case studies: the Ulster American Folk Park, the Lisburn Museum and Linen Centre, and Downpatrick Railway Museum. In terms of the economic impact of the sector, the following is a summary of the key figures:

- The 38 Accredited museums attracted 800,000 visitors in 2001, of whom 152,000 were from outside the region
- Total income amounted to around £17.3 million in 2000/01, equating to around 0.1% GDP
- The total expenditure of the sector is around £16.2 million, of which 85% is spent in Northern Ireland
- The sector employed 650 people in Northern Ireland in 2003

In terms of assessing the full economic impact of museums consistently in the future, it was concluded that data would have to be collected on such factors as:

- Direct and indirect employment
- Details of any franchised operations that are dependent on a museum
- Expenditure within the local economy
- Visitor numbers
- Visitor spend

It was also concluded that in addition to the 38 Accredited museums, a further 400 organisations existed at the time which could be considered museums⁴, and that 'it is impossible to accurately estimate the full impact of the total museum sector without further in-depth, primary research'⁵.

The next major piece of research was carried out in 2008, again by Price Waterhouse Coopers, in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.⁶ This research was intended to examine a model for understanding the social and economic value of public libraries, museums, arts and sport in Northern Ireland⁷. The study reproduced some headline economic figures for museums from the 2003 HLF report⁸, and also highlighted a number of potential social benefits, including those associated with tourism, education, health, regeneration, and social inclusion.⁹ However, two key recommendations highlighted the need for further research to be carried out:

⁴ NISRA. 2000. 'Omnibus survey', in *DCAL Local Museum and Heritage Review*, March 2001.

⁵ Price Waterhouse Coopers. 2003. *An Initial Review of the Economic Impact of Museums in Northern Ireland: Final Report*. Heritage Lottery Fund: p31.

⁶ DCAL, NISRA & PriceWaterhouseCoopers. 2008. *Social and Economic Value of Public Libraries, Museums, Arts and Sport in Northern Ireland Phase I: Designing a Model*.

⁷ DCAL, NISRA & PriceWaterhouseCoopers. 2008. *Social and Economic Value of Public Libraries, Museums, Arts and Sport in Northern Ireland Phase I: Designing a Model*.

⁸ DCAL, NISRA & PriceWaterhouseCoopers. 2008. *Social and Economic Value of Public Libraries, Museums, Arts and Sport in Northern Ireland Phase I: Designing a Model*: pvii.

⁹ DCAL, NISRA & PriceWaterhouseCoopers. 2008. *Social and Economic Value of Public Libraries, Museums, Arts and Sport in Northern Ireland Phase I: Designing a Model*: pviii.

- The last significant research regarding the economic benefits of museums in Northern Ireland was conducted in 2003. This research infrastructure is dated and the sector would benefit greatly from guidance from DCAL regarding a more frequent evaluation framework.
- Little research has been undertaken regarding the social benefits of museums in Northern Ireland, despite the importance of the sector nationally and internationally, evidenced throughout. Unlike the sports and arts sectors, museums benefit from having a clear 'customer base', and the impact of the sector should be easier to facilitate. Although the literature base illustrates that wider studies tend to place more emphasis on the economic rather than the social benefits of the sector, an effective social evaluation tool could be developed and rolled out on a consistent basis across Northern Ireland's museums sector.

The second stage of the study was intended to populate the model developed during stage one. However, in spite of the conclusion in the stage one report that 'sufficient data is available in which to examine the economic benefits across each of the business areas', it was later decided that in fact the available data for economic modelling was *not* sufficient, that too many assumptions would have to be made from pre-existing studies, and that only the area of libraries would be suitable for economic modelling to take place¹⁰.

It would seem that no major assessment of the economic and social impact of museums has been carried out since this attempt, meaning that there has been no concerted study since 2003.

In 2010, DCAL published results from the Continuous Household Survey conducted in 2008/09¹¹. On the basis of 3,414 respondents to the survey, the following conclusions were reached:

- 26% of respondents said they had visited a museum during the last 12 months while 70% claimed to have visited a museum during their life time.
- 21% have visited either one or more of the five museums under the remit of National Museums Northern Ireland in the last 12 months
- 76% of respondents who had been to a museum during their lifetime reported that they enjoyed their last visit 'a lot'
- The most frequently cited factor (28%) that would encourage respondents to visit museums more often was 'Exhibition or display of a subject I am interested in'

¹⁰ Assembly Research and Library Services. February 2008. 'Research paper: Economic modeling of value impacts of DCAL investment'.

¹¹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2010. *Experience of Museums in Northern Ireland: Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2008/09*.

- 63% of all the respondents reported that they were satisfied with museums provision in Northern Ireland

Meanwhile, the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC), as the body responsible for supporting local, non-national museums across Northern Ireland, has continued to undertake a variety of research which has relevance for the social and economic impact of museums, including the state of volunteering in local museums¹², staffing and employment trends¹³, marketing Northern Ireland's museums¹⁴, and the nature of learning opportunities in museums¹⁵.

Finally, NIMC has pointed out some of the difficulties of obtaining specific, robust data, collected over time, applied to an appropriate methodology, with a pre-agreed objective in mind for Northern Ireland, and that the current capacity of the sector in Northern Ireland to do this is weak¹⁶. As NIMC's *Marketing Northern Ireland's Museums* (2009) study highlighted, there is little by way of a common or standardised approach to the collection of even the basic data for Northern Ireland's museums and this would need to be rectified in order for the ubiquitous impacts to be properly assessed.

(b) England

In England, the lead museums body is currently the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA – soon to be abolished and its functions subsumed within Arts Council England). MLA has been a contributor to a joint research programme led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, also involving Arts Council England, English Heritage and Sport England, with the aim of strengthening understanding of how best to deliver high quality cultural (and sporting) opportunities. In 2010, the CASE programme produced a report which drew together analyses of the factors which drive engagement in culture and sport¹⁷. CASE has also produced an extensive database of over 5,000 studies on culture and sport engagement¹⁸.

In 2011, David O'Brien from Leeds Metropolitan University produced a report entitled *Measuring the value of culture: a report to DCMS*, assessing the different approaches to generating the value associated with engagement in culture and sport. This analyses both a range of economic valuation approaches, and also a set of emerging 'well-being-based' techniques. The report makes a number of recommendations, including action by DCMS to create clear guidance on how to use economic valuation (rather than economic impact) techniques of the kind already used across central government, and that the department should develop closer links with academics working in the area of cultural economics so that good practice continues to be followed.

¹² Northern Ireland Museums Council. 2010. *Volunteering in Local Museums in Northern Ireland*.

¹³ Northern Ireland Museums Council. 2010. *Staffing and Employment Trends within Northern Ireland's Museums*.

¹⁴ Northern Ireland Museums Council. 2009. *Marketing Northern Ireland's Museums*.

¹⁵ Northern Ireland Museums Council. 2008. *Learning within Museums in Northern Ireland*.

¹⁶ Northern Ireland Museums Council. 3.2.11. Written submission to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee: Inquiry into the value and impact of museums in Northern Ireland.

¹⁷ 'CASE': *Drivers, Impact and Value of engagement in culture and sport* (2010)

¹⁸ <http://www.eppi.ioe.ac.uk/webdatabases/Intro.aspx?ID=19>

A web resource exists which provides guidance for councils and their partners on how to create a 'local outcomes framework' for culture and sport. The resource is designed to help measure and show evidence of the contribution which culture and sport provision makes to local priorities and outcomes¹⁹.

In terms of museum-specific studies, MLA has produced a number of studies in recent years examining the relationship between museums and health benefits²⁰, cultural diversity²¹, and volunteering²². Since 2005, there has been a concerted effort to develop sound methodologies and an evidence base so that the value and impact of museums can be measured, compared and demonstrated²³. In 2008, MLA produced some detailed guidance on the range of approaches available to measure economic impact²⁴. This concluded that though multiplier analysis and cost benefit analysis have their uses, a Social Return on Investment (SROI) model, combining an expression of user preferences with multiplier analysis, is the most beneficial. This technique is described in greater detail in section 2, below. A number of museums in England have now used the SROI methodology to indicate their social and economic value²⁵.

Aside from work conducted by the MLA, the Association of Independent Museums produced an economic impact paper in 2010, including an economic value 'toolkit' which sets out a straightforward method by which museums can estimate the impact they may have on their local economy.²⁶ The toolkit sets out the calculations to be used to quantify (i) tourism impacts (ii) employment impacts and (iii) the impacts of spend on goods and services. In just six pages, the relevant definitions, formulae and necessary economic assumptions are laid out in a way which is designed to allow independent museums to 'accurately and quickly generate the data that is needed to estimate economic impacts'.²⁷

(c) Wales

The lead museums body in Wales is CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales (CyMAL), a Division of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). It was established in 2004 to provide policy advice on local museums, archives and libraries, develop policy, and provide development advice and support.

¹⁹ Local Government Improvement and Development. 2010. 'A guide to measuring Culture and Sport outcomes': <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=21649171> Accessed 7.2.11.

²⁰ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 2004. *Health Policy for Museums, Libraries and Archives*.

²¹ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 2004. *New Directions in Social Policy – Cultural Diversity for Museums, Libraries and Archives*.

²² Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 2006. *Volunteering in Museums Libraries and Archives*.

²³ For example, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 2005. *New Directions in Social Policy – Developing the Evidence Base for Museums, Libraries and Archives in England*; 2006. *Museums and Galleries in Britain: Economic, Social and Creative Impacts*.

²⁴ Jura consultants. 2008. *Economic Impact Methodologies for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector: What works and what doesn't*. Museums, Libraries and Archives.

²⁵ For example, the Museum of East Anglian Life: <http://nia1.me/5j>; there is also a list of SROI examples from England's regional museums: <http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=1150>

²⁶ Association of Independent Museums. 2010. *The Economic Value of the Independent Museums Sector*.

²⁷ Association of Independent Museums. 2010. *The Economic Value of the Independent Museums Sector*. p29.

There are 160 organisations in Wales that hold collections and display them to the public and could therefore be called museums. By September 2010, 89 had met the UK standard for museums, Accreditation.

CyMAL's museums strategy, *A Museums Strategy for Wales 2010-2015*, was launched in June 2010. This strategy identifies three themes which relate specifically to the issue of social and economic impact and value:

- **Museums for everyone:** Museums will contribute to living communities, promote the values of a fair and just society and provide lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **A collection for the nation:** Museums will hold, care for and continue to develop collections for the nation which represent our rich and diverse culture.
- **Working effectively:** Museums will manage their sites, operations, collections, and people effectively to provide services for citizens that are relevant, robust and sustainable.

The strategy is also supported by a detailed action plan²⁸.

In 2007, CyMAL published *Spotlight on Museums*²⁹, a data gathering exercise that requested information on a wide range of issues from museums across Wales. 106 organisations responded, including economic data such as budgets, staff employed and volunteer input. The exercise will be repeated in 2011 (and again in 2015) allowing comparisons to be made and trends identified. The 2007 report states that there are 89 Accredited museums, attracting a total of 3,143,632 visits, with national museums attracting 44% of this total.

(d) Scotland

The majority of work on this issue carried out in Scotland has been conducted by Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS), a membership organisation offering support to museums and galleries throughout Scotland. Throughout the 350 museums and galleries which MGS represent, it is estimated that 25 million people visit each year, and that £800 million is contributed to the Scottish economy.

MGS has carried out a number of relevant studies in recent years, including the impact of museums and galleries to Scottish tourism³⁰, and the impacts on their local communities³¹. This latter study includes a number of case studies which examine the impact of re-development, employment and work experience, community volunteering, community regeneration, and community engagement.

MGS is the lead partner in ALMA-UK (Archives, Libraries and Museums UK), which is currently conducting an 'Economic Impact' project as a result of a 'realisation that there

²⁸ CyMAL. 2010. *A Museums Strategy for Wales*: <http://nia1.me/5i> Accessed 4.2.11.

²⁹ CyMAL. 2007. *Spotlight on Museums*. Welsh Assembly Government.

³⁰ Museums Galleries Scotland. 2005. *Realising the True Impact: Report on the impact of museums and galleries to Scottish Tourism*.

³¹ Graham, M. 2008. 2008. *Impacts on Communities*. Museums Galleries Scotland.

is a proliferation of studies in this area, with a variety of methodologies and that there was the need to step back and take stock of the methods and their applicability³². The purpose of this project is firstly to analyse economic impact methodologies for archives, libraries and museums and support organisations from the sector, and secondly to create a series of potential toolkits that could be used by the sector. A report will derive from the first phase, and this is expected to be published in February 2011. The pilot studies which will make up phase two of the project will take place in various parts of the UK, and will include Northern Ireland.

(e) Republic of Ireland

The Heritage Council is the lead museums body in the Republic of Ireland. No museums-specific study has been carried out here recently³³, though there are a number of related studies which have examined the economic contribution of the arts, and of local authority heritage provision.

In 2007, a study was published which examined the value of heritage in Ireland, including both natural and built heritage, but also museums³⁴. The study involved a survey of 1008 adults from 100 randomly selected points throughout the Republic of Ireland. Some key conclusions which stand out from the research are that over 90% of people think it is very or fairly important to protect heritage, and there is a strong desire for penalties for those who damage heritage. Of those who expressed an interest in heritage, 68% cited 'personal health' as a key motivator. Other benefits highlighted by respondents include 'keeping in touch with the past for future generations', 'preserving our identity/cultural traditions', and 'pride in our own country/nationality'³⁵. When asked what forms of heritage protection tax revenue should be spent on, the greatest proportion of respondents said the restoration of canals and rivers (29.4%) and the safeguarding and improving coastal landscapes (22.3%). The least popular allocation of funding was towards museums to include better exhibitions and visitor facilities (1.7%). A contingent valuation technique was used (see Section 2 of this paper for more details on this), which indicated a value for heritage protection across the whole Irish population of €89.54 million.

In 2010, an economic evaluation of the County Heritage Plan (CHP) was published. CHP is managed by the Heritage Council, and provides a framework through which funding and support for heritage protection is promoted at the county level. The programme produces publications, training sessions and seminars, allocates funds to community projects, and conducts surveys of various components of heritage. The report concluded that CHP supported 1,085 jobs, which when a multiplier effect is

³² ALMA-UK. 3.2.11. Written submission to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee: Review into the value and impact of museums in Northern Ireland.

³³ Conversation with Beatrice Kelly, Head of Policy & Research, Heritage Council, Ireland. 31.1.11.

³⁴ Keith Simpson and Associates, Lansdowne Market Research, Optimize Consultants, & the Heritage Council. 2007. *Valuing Heritage in Ireland*. Heritage Council.

³⁵ Keith Simpson and Associates, Lansdowne Market Research, Optimize Consultants, & the Heritage Council. 2007. *Valuing Heritage in Ireland*. Heritage Council: p11.

applied is estimated to be 1,315 full-time equivalent jobs. The net wage injection into the economy is estimated at €30.1 million, and the contribution to the Exchequer is estimated at €5.3 million. The expenditure of €30.1 million in net wages resulted in an estimated total income effect of €45.1 million in the economy over the period from 2004 to 2008. In terms of spending on secondary services, including advertising, printing, graphic design, hotel facilities and catering services, €565,377 was spent between 2004 and 2008, which with a multiplier effect suggests a total expenditure impact of €848,065.

In terms of the contribution made by heritage to cultural tourism, Tourism Ireland indicate that in 2009, around 3,045,000 overseas visitors to Ireland engaged in historical/ cultural visits, and 46% of total overseas visitors carried out historical/ cultural visits while in the country³⁶. Overseas visitors to Ireland generated revenues of €3.1 billion.

2 Emerging methodologies

(a) Economic value and impacts

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council of England (MLA) conducted an extensive consultation exercise in 2008, resulting in a report which evaluates the various methodologies available and assesses the preferences of both the sector and stakeholders³⁷. The report concluded that of the various economic appraisal techniques available, the following have the most relevance for museums:

Method	Description	Assessment
Cost-benefit analysis	This technique identifies and analyses impacts in monetary terms and seeks to establish whether the benefits of an investment outweigh the costs.	Cost-benefit analysis tends to be used across the public and private sector to evaluate expenditure decisions. However, it is more often used as part of a decision-making process than to demonstrate impacts after the event.
Multiplier analysis	This demonstrates the Gross Value Added (GVA) impacts on the local and wider economy. Such impacts would include both direct effects, including the employment of staff, and indirect effects, including people employed by business which supply goods and services to the museum and the consumption expenditure of those employed by or through the museum. The technique derives from the tourism sector, and is applied also to the natural and built environment, arts and culture and sport.	Multipliers are effective at illustrating the 'trickle down' effects of a museum's economy, though there are difficulties in that setting multiplier values and visitor expenditure is subjective. Multipliers also fail to capture the broad range of social, cultural and educational benefits

³⁶ Tourism Ireland. 2010. *Facts & Figures 2009: Island of Ireland Overseas Visitors*: <http://nia1.me/2g> Accessed 7.2.11.

³⁷ Jura consultants. 2008. *Economic Impact Methodologies for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector: What works and what doesn't*. Museums, Libraries and Archives: pp16–17.

Contingent valuation	This methodology uses a 'stated preference' model to ask users (and non-users) to place a value on the service offered. Users are asked to indicate value through (a) their Willingness to Pay (WTP) for a service which is in fact free, or (b) their Willingness To Accept (WTA) the loss of a service in the form of compensation. The technique is used frequently in the health sector, environment and transport.	Contingent valuation indicates the value of a service, rather than the straightforward economic impact. It produces a monetary indicator for values which are not in themselves economic. There are difficulties in defining and including non-users to obtain a balanced picture, and in defining the value ranges which users may select from when asked.
Social return on investment (SROI)	This technique combines multiplier analysis and contingent valuation to indicate both impact and value, and including a range of financial, economic and social indicators. SROI was used in the USA to assess the state library sector.	SROI offers flexibility in that it provides a range of indicators, and can be used to monitor changes in the impact of a museum through time.

Table 1: Summary of four key techniques for assessing economic value and impact

The report asserts that an important distinction should be made between economic impact and economic value³⁸.

Consultation with the sector indicated that economic impact and value methodologies must consider more than the income, expenditure and employment impacts of the services and must take into account wider social and economic impacts.

Impact can be thought of as such factors as museum turnover (including core support, trading activities and entry charges), the leverage of other financial resources (such as sponsorship, grants and donations), sustaining direct and indirect employment (with some studies considering the impact of staff expenditure within the local economy), the influence of capital programmes on local regeneration, the impact of visitor spend within the museums and more widely, and the contribution of museums in attracting and causing spending by tourists, both domestic and 'out of state'³⁹. One example of a recent study which adopted an economic impact model is the Natural History Museum, which used multiplier analysis to conclude that their direct expenditure is £83.3 million per year, their ancillary spending is in the range of £169m to £175m, and that through a multiplier value of 1.5, their overall economic impact is between £253m and £262m⁴⁰.

Such an approach contrasts with economic *value*, which is an expression of the wider economic significance of the museum held both by those who use the museum, and

³⁸ Jura consultants. 2008. *Economic Impact Methodologies for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector: What works and what doesn't*. Museums, Libraries and Archives: pp41.

³⁹ Northern Ireland Museums Council. 3.2.11. Written submission to the Culture, Arts and leisure Committee: Inquiry into the value and impact of museums in Northern Ireland.

⁴⁰ Travers, T & Brown, R. 2010. *Treasurehouse and Powerhouse 2010: A report for the Natural History Museum*. Natural History Museum and London School of Economics.

the value placed in its existence by those within its 'catchment' by those who *do not* use it.

The overall conclusion of the 2008 MLA report is that the method used will depend on the intended outcome; while the multiplier approach is appropriate when the economic *impact* is being assessed, the SROI model is preferred if economic *value* is to be measured⁴¹. Furthermore, SROI will give some indication of the social impacts of a service.

However, it is also pointed out that standardising some of the definitions used and the ways in which data are captured is important, both in establishing a baseline for a single institution or service which can then be measured against by subsequent studies, and in comparing several different services across a region. While sectors such as library (through the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) and archives (through the Public Service Quality Group) have developed standardised approaches to data capture, museums currently do not. Categories of information which are important to analyse in a consistent manner would include:

- Visitor numbers
- Engagement events
- Services delivered
- Non-users

A number of museums, libraries and archives services across England have now produced economic value studies using an SROI analysis⁴².

The UK Government Cabinet Office has commissioned guidelines for how to apply SROI techniques to create a numeric result to express both social and economic value⁴³.

Annexe 1 sets out a case study from Bolton's museum, library and archive services which, in 2005, published an economic valuation using a contingent valuation methodology. The steps followed by the museum's consultants are described. In summary, the study concluded that the Bolton population valued their museums, libraries and archives at £10.4 million. Relative to the £6.5 million of public funding it receives, these services generate 1.6 times the value of their funding. In other words, for every £1 spent on the service, £1.60 in value is generated. The survey also enabled the three services to be ranked, with libraries the most valued at £5.6 million, followed by museums at £4.5 million and then archives at £0.28 million.

⁴¹ Jura consultants. 2008. *Economic Impact Methodologies for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector: What works and what doesn't*. Museums, Libraries and Archives: pp42.

⁴² Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). 2009. 'Capturing outcomes from Regional Museum Hubs' community engagement activities': <http://nia1.me/53> Accessed 2.2.11.

⁴³ The SROI Network. 2011. 'The guide to SROI': <http://www.thesroinetwork.org/content/view/100/101> Accessed 7.2.11.

(b) Social value and impacts

There is a considerable variety of methods identified to record social impact. Karen Maas has identified twenty social impact measurement methods⁴⁴, while another study suggests upwards of thirty⁴⁵.

As highlighted above, a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, incorporating contingent variation, will provide a degree of social value indication. There are also a range of qualitative techniques which will provide further indications of social value and impact.

Among the first attempts to classify the benefits to be gained from cultural services in general were made in the 1990s by Charles Landry⁴⁶ and François Matarasso⁴⁷. Matarasso in particular defined 50 impacts, grouped under six key headings, as follows:

- Personal development
- Social cohesion
- Community empowerment and self-determination
- Local image and identity
- Imagination and vision
- Health

Building on these definitions, attempts have been made more recently to create empirical measures of social impact categories, though the number of case studies is relatively low – certainly somewhat lower than for economic impact studies⁴⁸.

More specific to museums, the MLA has defined a set of ‘Generic Social Outcomes’ to help organisations to measure and provide evidence of the wider benefits of their work⁴⁹. These are structured around specific government policy areas (deriving from the previous government), including:

- Stronger and safer communities
- Health and well-being
- Strengthening public life

⁴⁴ Maas, K: *Social Impact Measurement: Towards a Guideline for Managers*. (2008) http://www.erim.eur.nl/portal/page/portal/ERIM/Research/Centres/Erasmus_Centre_for_Strategic_Philanthropy/Research/Publications/Social_Impact_Measurement_voor_sso_nieuwsbrief%5B1%5D.pdf

⁴⁵ Wood, C and Leighton, D: *Measuring Social Value* (2010) http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Measuring_social_value_-_web.pdf?1278410043 p23.

⁴⁶ Landry, C et al. 1993. *The Social Impact of the Arts: A Discussion Document*. Comedia.

⁴⁷ Matarasso, F. 1997. *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. Comedia.

⁴⁸ Examples include: Bryson, J, Usherwood, B & Streatfield, D. 2002. *South West Archives and Libraries Social Impact Audit*; Centre for Sport and Leisure at Leeds Metropolitan University. 2002. *Count Me In: The Dimensions of Social Inclusion through Culture and Sport*; Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. 2002. *A Catalyst for Change: The Social Impact of the Open Museum*; Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. 2000. *Museums and Social Inclusion: The GLLAM Report, October 2000*; Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2004. *DCMS Evidence Toolkit*.

⁴⁹ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 2008. ‘Generic social outcomes’: <http://nia1.me/5p> Accessed 7.2.11.

A series of resources are provided to offer guidance in how to capture evidence for each of these broad outcome themes⁵⁰.

The Northern Ireland Museums Council has identified six distinct contributions to social impact, including:

- **Learning and education** – through scholarship, research, curriculum development, and as a resource for further and higher education.
- **Creative industries** – through the exploitation of their cultural assets for creative inspiration.
- **Civic pride** – where museums act as landmarks, as institutional buildings (whether occupying a building important to the architectural heritage or a new-build symbolising the regeneration of a town or area), as a mark of a ‘civilised’ community, as icon for promotion and as a venue for events;
- **Identity** – they are the home of societal memory, they use collections to explore the basis of beliefs and outlooks, to substantiate cultural diversity, and for developing community relations. Museums also contribute to our image abroad through touring exhibitions and loans;
- **Well-being and health** – both generally through museums’ commitment to volunteering, work placements and training, and more specifically through discrete and focused projects dealing with the broad range of social issues – ethnicity, growing old, literacy programmes, combating recidivism, physical and mental health - and using all manner of engagement methods – object handling, loan boxes, reminiscence, etc.
- **Communication and participation** – museums invariably ‘signpost’ people to further involvement with culture and heritage, provide varied programmes of events and activities, and their staff are often involved with external bodies and groups.

One approach, adopted by Museums Galleries Scotland, was used in 2008 to assess the various strengths of a museum’s community role⁵¹. A tool was applied which uses a 1 to 5 ranking to assess how those who engage with a museum (including tourists, those whose cultural heritage the museum protects and interprets, and those who have specialist knowledge in the subject matter) perceive it. The following criteria were used:

- Museum as a visitor attraction
- Museum as a catalyst for change
- Museum as centre for creativity
- Museum as a memory bank
- Museum as a storyteller
- Museum as attic

⁵⁰ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 2008. ‘How can you capture the impact that you are having?’: <http://nia1.me/5o> Accessed 7.2.11.

⁵¹ Graham, M 2008. 2008. *Impacts on Communities*. Museums Galleries Scotland: pp56-8.

- Museum as treasure trove
- Museum as shrine/hall of fame
- Museum as exclusive club

This tool also allows for measurements to be compared and monitored over an extended period of time.

Annexe 2 describes a further practical example of a project which sought to record the social impact of museum programmes, conducted by Tyne and Wear Museums, with the help of Bristol’s Museums.

In summary, the Tyne and Wear/Bristol study sought to assess the social impact of various museum programmes. A series of focus groups and questionnaires were conducted, staff were interviewed, and audience data was examined. The report produced a logic model to guide future attempts to assess the social impact.

Some key lessons were learned from this exercise, including the importance of defining what social impacts are sought during the planning stages of a new museum programme. It is commented that too often an imprecise definition of social impact is used, and that there is at times a narrow equation between positive social impact, and serving audiences from lower socio-economic groups, potentially ignoring other meaningful impacts. The report concludes that museums should define the target populations for which a social impact is sought, and to work with these populations over sustained periods of time in order to achieve that outcome. At the same time, the kinds of evidence that will be needed to test the level of impact should be thought about, and a data collection strategy designed. Finally, it is concluded that a ‘feedback loop’ should be established so that one programme’s social impact assessment informs the planning and execution of future projects.

However, there are a range of wider potential social impacts of museums for which no measure, indicator or survey currently exists. However, some parallels can be drawn with the film industry, which offers a range of benefits which are of value to society⁵². Such impacts could include the following factors:

- Museums play a role in **recording, capturing and reflecting culture**, thereby contributing to community identity, confidence and interest.
- Museums, in conserving, displaying and interpreting the cultural heritage of communities within Northern Ireland, help collectively to **‘tell the story’** of Northern Ireland for both internal and external audiences.
- Museums can deliver **creative transfer**, whereby others are inspired to create products, services and activities having visited or worked with a museum
- Museums have intrinsic **cultural and educational value**

⁵² See, for example: Oxford Economics. 2007. *The Economic Impact of the UK Film Industry*, and Jura consultants. 2008. *Economic Impact Methodologies for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector: What works and what doesn’t*. Museums, Libraries and Archives: pp26–7.

Museums may also play a role in promoting and maintaining community relations. The draft DCAL *Museums Policy for Northern Ireland* states in the ministerial statement that⁵³,

Collaborations between museums and communities provide a vital role in understanding our shared history, heritage and culture as we move forward into the 21st century and museums can and do play an important role to address issues of social inclusion and social cohesion.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in England has acknowledged the role which the museum sector can play in contributing to communities, including⁵⁴,

- Fostering and creating pride in communities
- Celebrating local identity and sense of place
- Providing safe and trusted public spaces
- Promoting vibrant local cultures
- Empowering and engaging people from all backgrounds
- Creating cohesive communities
- Providing access to other services

One aspect of these social contributions, the creation of safe and trusted spaces, is addressed in the draft *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (CSI) document, which states an intention to create⁵⁵,

- *Shared and safe spaces for working, shopping, socialising and playing;*
- *Shared accessible and welcoming facilities which provide high quality public services;*
- *Safety for individuals and groups who wish to express and celebrate their identity or culture peacefully*

Further on in the CSI document, the specific role of museums is described, and their social role broadened to include activities⁵⁶:

...the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is developing a policy for museums that will likely aim to ensure that museums are seen as safe places for everyone to explore and participate in diverse types of community activity.

⁵³ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 24.7.10. 'Museums policy for Northern Ireland: Consultation document': pp11-12.

⁵⁴ Jura Consulting. 2008. *Economic Impact Methodologies for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector: What works and what doesn't*. Museums, Libraries and Archives: p9.

⁵⁵ OFMdfM. 26.7.10. *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Consultation Document*: p11.

⁵⁶ OFMdfM. 26.7.10. *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Consultation Document*: p38.

(c) Cultural heritage tourism

The contribution which museums make to tourism, and especially cultural tourism, has been the subject of a number of studies, the most recent of which was commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2009 and carried out by Oxford Economics⁵⁷. This research shows that the UK heritage-based tourism economy is bigger than any previous analyses had indicated. Museums make a significant contribution to UK tourism, with eight of the top 10 UK visitor attractions in 2008 being museums and galleries.

The research concluded that the size of the heritage-tourism sector, by expenditure, is in excess of £12.4 billion a year, £7.3 billion of which is based on built heritage and the museums sector (the remaining £5.1 billion being natural heritage). This means that heritage tourism makes a contribution to the total output of the UK economy (in terms of GDP) of £7.4 billion per year. The report claims that this is a bigger contribution than that of many other sectors of the economy, including advertising, film, and the car industry. This scale of activity supports an estimated 195,000 full-time-equivalent jobs. Once economic 'multiplier' effects are included, the GDP contribution of heritage tourism rises to £20.6 billion a year, supporting a around 466,000 jobs. 60% of heritage tourists are UK residents.

In Northern Ireland specifically, the 2009 Tourism Ireland report shows that 157,300 visitors (or 11% of the total for the island of Ireland) engaged in 'cultural/ historical' activities⁵⁸. This compares with 3,045,000 (or 46%) for the Republic of Ireland. The Northern Ireland figure for cultural/ historical visits accounts for 36% of total Northern Ireland visitors, whereas the Republic of Ireland figure accounts for 51% of its own total.

(d) Educational impacts

The most widely used framework for assessing and improving the education and learning impact of museums is the Inspiring Learning for All framework (Ilfa), developed in 2004 by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). This defines a set of five Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO), as follows⁵⁹:

- **Knowledge and understanding:** covers areas such as knowing what or about something, learning facts or information, making sense of something, deepening understanding, understanding how museums, libraries and archives operate, and making links and relationships between things
- **Skills:** includes skill categories such as knowing how to do something, being able to do new things, intellectual skills, information management skills, social skills, communication skills, and physical skills

⁵⁷ Heritage Lottery Fund & Oxford Economics. 2010. *Investing in Success: Heritage and the UK Tourism Economy*.

⁵⁸ Tourism Ireland. 2010. *Facts & Figures 2009: Island of Ireland Overseas Visitors*: <http://nia1.me/2g> Accessed 7.2.11.

⁵⁹ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. 'Inspiring learning: an improvement framework for museums, libraries and archives': <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk> Accessed 4.2.11.

- **Attitudes and values:** including feelings and perceptions, opinions about ourselves, opinions or attitudes towards other people, increased capacity for tolerance, empathy, increased motivation, attitudes towards an organisation, and positive and negative attitudes in relation to an experience
- **Activity, behaviour and progression:** covers issues such as what people do, what people intend to do, what people have done, reported or observed actions, and a change in the way people manage their lives
- **Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity:** outcomes include having fun, being surprised, innovative thoughts, creativity, exploration, experimentation and making, and being inspired

Ilfa provides guidance for recording and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data. A range of organisations have now used this framework to carry out assessments of their own learning impact, including National Museums Liverpool, the BBC, English Heritage, and the Tate Gallery in London.

CASE has conducted a systematic review of studies examining the learning impacts of culture and sport for young people⁶⁰. This review concludes that there is 'promising evidence' that attendance at a museum, gallery and/or heritage site may improve students' attitudes towards school as well as their self-confidence in their learning abilities. Two studies reviewed by the CASE team suggest that academic attainment increased in pupils who had made museums visits⁶¹.

However, the review also notes that there have been, to date, very few high quality studies of the impact of museums on learning outcomes, and that any general conclusions in this regard must be limited.

A number of more specific educational assessments of museums have been carried out, such as a report commissioned by a range of science museums in England which examined how they could contribute to secondary school science teaching⁶².

(e) Cultural impacts

In a recent essay, the museums analyst Sara Selwood outlines some of the difficulties of describing the differences that museum collections and exhibitions can make to individuals and communities beyond the social and economic – in other words, 'how

⁶⁰ CASE: The Culture and Sport Evidence Programme. 2010. *Understanding the Impact of Engagement in Culture and Sport: A systematic review of the learning impacts for young people*: pp55-61.

⁶¹ The two studies cited are Watson, S, Dodd, J & Jones, C. 2007. *The Impact of Museum Visits on the Attainment of Secondary Pupils in the East of England : 2006-2007*. Leicester: Research Centre for Museums and Galleries; and West, H. 2008. 'A study of the impact of using the TASC wheel on children's involvement in their own learning'. *Gifted Education International* 24(2-3): 297 - 304.

⁶² Collins, S & Lee, A. 2006. *How Can Natural History Museums Support Secondary Science Teaching and Learning: A consultative study*. Natural History Museum, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, The Manchester Museum, Tyne & Wear Museums, and King's College London.

they affect their understanding of the world and how people respond to their museum experiences'⁶³.

A survey of the 28 national museums revealed a number of common motivations of cultural impact held by the museums themselves, including:

- Promoting a wider interest in history and the world in general and more specifically, generating empathy for and understanding of minority groups
- Addressing marginalization
- Encouraging community engagement
- Advancing institutional interests, authority and values
- Dealing with difficult subject matter
- Challenging perceptions and creating associations and identities

From the point of view of museum audiences, Selwood summarises a number of common responses to museum programmes, including,

- Saying the unsaid – articulating and exploring sensitive and difficult issues within the context of a national institution
- Generating a sense of belonging and integrating themselves within local communities and society
- Opening themselves up to different attitudes and perceptions
- Considering their affiliations and associations

There are a number of challenges in measuring and demonstrating cultural value, and few studies have been attempted. A key issue would seem to be the fact that culture is regarded as intrinsic rather than instrumental – that is, culture can carry its own perceived value, without necessarily being the means or agent for a further purpose which may manifest itself in a measureable fashion. Another challenge in measuring the cultural value of museums is in designing a generic, transferable framework for something like culture, which may be regarded by some as being of value precisely because it is inherently unique and specific.

However, in spite of these challenges, the Northern Ireland Museums Council highlights the importance of assessing the social, economic *and* cultural value of museums in order to gain a comprehensive picture of their overall impact:

The primacy of measuring the economic and social impacts, perhaps since the mid-1990s, has gone hand in hand with the culture of accountability through targets and qualitative performance measurement. The intrinsic value of culture, particularly as represented by museums, has been seen to lack currency against this background. It is to the sector's credit that it has sought to and succeeded in making a difference in social and economic

⁶³ Selwood, S. 2010. *Making a Difference: The cultural impact of museums*. An essay for the National Museum Director's Conference.

terms. This has been enabled by the flexibility of programming, the commitment of staff and the underlying spirit of what museums are about. Notably that has not seen an appropriate quid pro quo, through which 'cultural impacts' are sought from those publicly funded bodies concerned directly with social and economic development. A clear and more comprehensive picture of museums' contribution may be had through an assessment of their cultural, social and economic impact.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Northern Ireland Museums Council. 3.2.11. Written submission to the Culture, Arts and leisure Committee: Inquiry into the value and impact of museums in Northern Ireland.

Annexe 1: Case Study: Assessing economic value at Bolton's museum, library and archive services

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council commissioned Jura Consultants in 2005 to undertake an economic valuation of Bolton's museum, library and archive services⁶⁵. The purpose of the exercise was⁶⁶:

...raising the profile of museums, libraries and archives with key decision-makers by demonstrating the value of the sector to the local economy in a way which is robust and tangible.

The methodology used a contingent valuation model, employing face-to-face questionnaires to survey 325 Bolton residents including both users and non-users of the services. The questionnaires consisted of 50 questions, and focused on topics such as an initial user profile (age, gender, ethnic group, household income and education level), the level of use of services, frequency of use, time spent and financial spend, travel cost to reach services, the importance of different elements of the services, use of alternatives, and finally Willingness to Pay (WTP)/Willingness to Accept (WTA) questions. Examples of WTP and WTA questions include the following⁶⁷:

Imagine that all Bolton residents were issued with Museum passes allowing year round access to all Bolton museums. What is the minimum amount you would accept each month to give up your Museum pass?

To help respondents to form a value for the service, a series of 'prompts' were adopted. One such prompt was the current cost per month per Council Tax payer of each of the services. For example, libraries cost around £3 per month, museums cost £1 and archives £0.50. Respondents were asked⁶⁸:

Would it be fair to say that you would be willing to pay, for example, £1 a month to support the continuation of museums in Bolton?

The results were presented in a way which allowed for a breakdown of separate museum library and archive values. These results were then 'grossed-up' in the following manner:

1. The mean value for museums, libraries and archives was calculated from the survey results.

⁶⁵ Jura Consultants. 2005. *Bolton's Museum, Library and Archives Services: An Economic Valuation*. Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and MLA North West.

⁶⁶ Jura Consultants. 2005. *Bolton's Museum, Library and Archives Services: An Economic Valuation*. Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and MLA North West: pi.

⁶⁷ Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and MLA North West. 2005. *Bolton's Museum, Library and Archive Services: An economic valuation toolkit*. Appendix A: User and non-user questionnaire.

⁶⁸ Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and MLA North West. 2005. *Bolton's Museum, Library and Archive Services: An economic valuation toolkit*. Appendix A: User and non-user questionnaire.

2. For museum users, these values were multiplied by the total number of visitors – this is calculated by the total number of visits, divided by 2.96, a figure calculated by MLA North-West as a result of previous studies for the number of repeat visits.
3. For non-users, the mean value was multiplied by the total number of adults in the Bolton Metropolitan area.

This produced the result that the Bolton population valued the service at £10.4 million. Relative to the £6.5 million of public funding it receives, Bolton's museums, libraries and archives generate 1.6 times the value of its funding. In other words, for every £1 spent on the service, £1.60 in value is generated. The survey also enabled the three services to be ranked, with libraries the most valued at £5.6 million, followed by museums at £4.5 million and then archives at £0.28 million.

Five focus groups were also conducted with local groups to test further the WTP and WTA values, as well as to interrogate other aspects of the questionnaires. Moreover, the focus groups helped 'pick up the community and social benefits which the survey does not necessarily take account of'⁶⁹.

Following the Bolton example, Jura Consultants advise that a study programme of a similar nature should take around 13 weeks to complete. The costs of such an exercise were not made clear in publications.

⁶⁹ Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and MLA North West. 2005. *Bolton's Museum, Library and Archive Services: An economic valuation toolkit*: p5.

Annexe 2: Case Study – Assessing social impact at Tyne & Wear Museums

In 2004 Tyne and Wear Museums (TWM) commissioned an investigation into the social impact of its programmes, and asked for recommendations to help maximise such impacts in the future. The following year, Bristol's Museums joined the project.

The following is a summary of the tasks undertaken as part of the review:

- More than 40 documents were reviewed relating to the social impact of museums and cultural institutions, including government-commissioned research, academic literature and toolkits
- An annotated bibliography of sources was compiled
- A literature review was prepared, summarising three key issues: terminology, methodology, and some of the challenges previously experienced in measuring social impact
- Staff involved with the selected museums programmes were interviewed about what they had hoped to achieve in creating the various museums programmes
- Matarasso's 50 social impacts were used as a prompt, but staff were free to add or change these accordingly.
- Nine focus groups were held with a total of 63 programme participants, and face-to-face questionnaires were completed with the same 63 programme participants. These exercises produced quantitative data by asking a series of eight questions of the participants about whether any of the following impacts had had an effect on them:
 - Had they learned something new?
 - Did their desire to learn increase?
 - Had they been encouraged by the museums programme to explore new ideas?
 - Were they were inspired to do something new or creative as a result of the museum programme?
 - Had their confidence increased?
 - Had their skills developed?
 - Was their health and well-being positively affected?
 - Did their pride in their own culture and traditions increase as a result of the programme visit?
- The qualitative and quantitative data from interviews and surveys was analysed
- Audience data for TWM and Bristol was analysed, including factors such as whether overall attendance had gone up over the period of the programmes being investigated, and the number of school visits

- A logic model was constructed as a basis for assessing programme impact in the future. This sets out a sequence of steps, including defining the museums inputs (staff, finances, collections community partners, and spaces), and the key steps (such as determining the desired social impact goals from the outset, clarifying what evidence should be sought, and designing an appropriate data collection strategy).

This case study concludes that three key challenges remain in assessing the social impacts of a museum:

- Finding long-term social outcomes that are realistic
- Knowing it was the museum that made the difference
- Creating an authoritative, credible account of the social impacts

The project team made a number of recommendations in response to these challenges, including the importance of defining what social impacts are sought during the planning stages of a new museum programme. It is commented that too often an imprecise definition of social impact is used, and that there is at times a narrow equation between positive social impact, and serving audiences from lower socio-economic groups, potentially ignoring other meaningful impacts.

The report concludes that museums should define the target populations for which a social impact is sought, and to work with these populations over sustained periods of time in order to achieve that outcome. At the same time, the kinds of evidence that will be needed to test the level of impact should be thought about, and a data collection strategy designed. Finally, it is concluded that a 'feedback loop' should be established so that one programme's social impact assessment informs the planning and execution of future projects.