

‘Quantifying the use of museum archaeological collections’ project

Brief for consultancy to create project design

Particulars of appointment

- Freelance contract fee: £3,980 (inclusive of VAT)
- Delivery date/timescale: Delivery of final product (project design) mid-Jan 2022 tbc.
- Payment terms: on SMA approval of final product (January 2022).
- Insurance: evidence of professional indemnity cover to be provided at application stage.
- Reports to: SMA Committee (Project Working Group).
- Expenses: all work to be online/ telephone, no travel or subsistence budget is included.

Context

The Society for Museum Archaeology (SMA) is Arts Council England’s recognised subject specialist network for archaeology in the UK. It has members in all the regions of the UK, as well as abroad. As such it is uniquely placed to produce this survey and report. As well as promoting museum involvement in all aspects of archaeology, the SMA works to encourage greater public understanding of the archaeological past and a fuller public appreciation of the importance of archaeology, and campaigns for the acceptance of museums as guardians of a vital part of the nation's heritage and as the appropriate location for the storage and interpretation of all archaeological material.

More information about SMA, its activities and constitution can be found on its website:
www.socmusarch.org.uk

Project brief

Overview

The SMA has been awarded funding by Historic England to create a project design for a proposed project ‘Quantifying the use of museum archaeological collections’. This brief is for a consultant to deliver the project design only, for submission to Historic England by SMA as an application for funding for the full project (commissioning of the full project is dependent on gaining this funding).

The overarching aim of the project is to demonstrate the current range and level of use of archaeological collections held by museums. This type of data has not been comprehensively gathered before but is required to better inform significant current debates and to support initiatives exploring the wide range of potential benefits that public access to archaeological heritage can deliver.

The specific aims are to:

- Gather data in real time about the use of archaeological collections in museums nationwide, using an appropriate survey method to ensure a robust and comparative dataset is achieved.
- Disseminate and promote results of the survey to the sector to contribute to wider debates about collection, use of, and access to archaeological heritage.

The questions which the project aims to answer are:

- What purposes archaeological collections are being used for, which types and how often?
- Who is accessing archaeological collections to use them (e.g. academic, professional, public)?

- What are the primary purposes/ benefits of access (e.g. personal interest, research, education, wellbeing)?
- What sorts of settings archaeological collections are being accessed through or used in (or not)?
- How do people search for or find information about archaeological collections in museums?
- What scale of use is being facilitated (e.g. how many enquiries, what level of information and access, how much resource is required)?
- Which uses of archaeological collections are chargeable?
- What are the primary barriers to facilitation (e.g. lack of resources/ capacity, lack of awareness or promotion of archives internally or externally, exclusion factors)?

Purpose and outcomes

The overall purpose of this stage of work is to create a project design for submission to Historic England by SMA. The project design will form a costed and timetabled plan for the full project.

Museum archaeological collections (physical artefact and archive collections, both on display and in store, and digital collections) are a significant component of our national heritage, and a primary point of engagement for the public with the results of archaeological fieldwork. The pressures that museums with archaeological collections are facing in terms of diminishing storage space, staff reductions and loss of expertise are well documented¹. However, enabling these collections to be used for a wide range of purposes remains a core function for most museums, with innovative methods of engagement being employed to enable them to achieve maximum public benefit².

The Society for Museum Archaeology (SMA) is proposing to conduct a survey to gather data about the usage of archaeological collections. Working with a targeted, representative sample of museum institutions and collections, the survey will establish baseline data about the types and scale of use that archaeological collections are being used for nationally. Results of the survey will be published as a report for the funder and as an open access report on the SMA website.

In creating a project design for this work, it is expected that the consultant will:

- Develop a survey method and outline it in the project design: creation of toolkit/ protocol/ IT approach that will allow the most effective, comparative 'real-time' data collection. It is likely this will use a standard online platform (such as Microsoft Forms or SurveyMonkey) to ensure maximum compatibility with organisational systems, and that the method will include support for participating museums and a user community. The SMA is open to this being a two-step survey method, with quantitative survey being followed by targeted qualitative survey.
- Selection of museum partners: liaise with organisations to find a list (c.20 tbc) which will achieve a representative sample in terms of institution type, size, geographical spread and collections and who are interested in participating in the project if commissioned. SMA has already received a number of expressions of interest, but it is anticipated that work will be needed to establish partners who are not only willing, but also able in practical terms, to commit to the level of input needed to take on the tasks required to collect data effectively.
- Liaise with relevant stakeholders: there are a number of organisations and initiatives that the consultant should be prepared to consult with to ensure data collected is comparable and applicable to wider sector initiatives.
- Produce a fully costed and timetabled project design document which outlines the survey set up, data collection, analysis, evaluation and publication phases. Guidance on what a Historic England MoRPHE-compliant project design should contain can be found here:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/guidance-grants-projects/>

¹ Booth, N., Boyle, G. and Rawden, A., 2016/17/18. *Museums Collecting Archaeology (England) Reports*. Society for Museum Archaeology.

² Boyle, G. and Butterworth, J., (eds), 2021. *Communicating Archaeology: case studies in the use of, and engagement with, archaeological collections*. Society for Museum Archaeology

To enable this:

- The SMA has already produced a proposal for the project and has Historic England review comments on this, both of which will be supplied to the successful candidate to form the basis of the project design.
- The SMA Working Group will hold a briefing meeting with the appointed consultant to discuss the key issues to be addressed within the project design.

Required skills, knowledge and experience

Candidates will be expected to be able to demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

COMPETENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding of museums, museum collections and the wide range of uses the survey must capture. ▪ Understanding what is required to plan for the successful delivery of project work on time and to budget.
EXPERIENCE	<p>A proven track record of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and delivery of survey projects. ▪ Experience of working with museums or within the wider cultural heritage sector. ▪ Working in collaborative partnerships. ▪ Creating MoRPHE-compliant project designs or other comparable funding applications.
SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication and relationship building. ▪ Time management. ▪ Project management. ▪ Relevant sector initiatives and previous work in this area.
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Motivated, “can-do” approach. ▪ Ability to problem solve.
OTHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness of museum ethics ▪ Commitment to equality and diversity and an understanding of how this applies to this role.

Proposal to tender

The consultancy proposal tender should include:

- A project timetable and design, with a narrative description of how the programme of work will be delivered.
- A budget /pricing breakdown indicating day rates, expenses and any VAT payable (please ensure day rates are reflected in overall breakdown).
- Details of the relevant experience and competency possessed by the consultant and any other personnel who will work on the consultancy as listed under ‘Required key skills, knowledge and experience’ above. NB candidates should signpost comparable projects and outcomes they have delivered.
- CV.
- Names and addresses of two referees.
- Evidence of professional indemnity cover.

Evaluation criteria

We will evaluate your tender against the following criteria:

Criteria weighting	
Relevant experience and skills	40%
Strength of proposal	35%
Value for money	25%

The SMA Is not bound to award the tender to the lowest priced proposal.

Proposals must be submitted via email to:

Angie Bolton: SMA Hon. Secretary angie.bolton@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Queries or questions about this tender should be addressed to: Gail Boyle: Project Working Group
gail.boyle@bristol.gov.uk

Closing date Friday 10 December 2021

SMA November 2021