MAKE YOUR OWN MUSEUM OF THE INTANGIBLE: A TOOLKIT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed to help museums and other heritage organisations use the combination of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) ideas and creative and digital practices to make their own 'Museum of the Intangible'. It's based on our own experiences of creating a Museum of the Intangible at the Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL), Reading, and shares what we have learned.

This toolkit includes:

1. an introduction to the Museum of the Intangible concept
2. an introduction to intangible cultural heritage
3. information about the relevance of ICH to museums, creative practice and digital practice
4. case studies from The MERL's Museum of the Intangible
5. some key things to consider before undertaking this type of activity
6. further reading.

What is a Museum of the Intangible?

A Museum of the Intangible is an idea. It is a way in which museums can bring some of the complex ideas about intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to their audiences – whether it's introducing the concept of ICH to your audiences and considering what it means to them, exploring some of the ICH connected with your collections to increase your understanding of them and to interpret them in new ways, or helping support the safeguarding of particular ICH practices. Or something else – it's entirely up to you!

The MERL has used creative and digital practice as way of doing this – but you might want to do something different. The key thing about a Museum of the Intangible is that it moves away from the traditional focus of heritage (and museums) on tangible 'things', and moves towards a broader definition of heritage which incorporates the intangible as well.

You can find out more about what ICH is in **Section 2**.

What makes a Museum of the Intangible different?

Museums are repositories of human culture and experience. While the traditional museum focuses on its physical collections of objects, a Museum of the Intangible is also about cultural practices, traditions, skills, knowledge, meanings, memories, identities, relationships – and all the other non-physical aspects of human experience.

Intangible heritage is living heritage – it is alive. This means that it is not easily interpreted using the traditional museum methods of collecting and preserving, which freeze ICH at a particular point in time. A Museum of the Intangible is about finding other ways to explore and engage with ICH, and provides a brilliant opportunity for creative engagement and working with communities.

You can find out more about how and why museums could and should engage with ICH in **Section 3**.

What does a Museum of the Intangible look like?

If you still can't picture what a Museum of the Intangible might involve, look ahead to **Section 4** for case studies from The MERL's Museum of the Intangible which describe some of our exhibits and how they came about.

NB. In this toolkit we will use the term 'exhibits' to describe the outputs/creative responses that were generated for our Museum of the Intangible.

How easy is it?

A Museum of the Intangible may involve new ideas for curators and museum staff, as well as for audiences, and may involve partnerships with people your museum may not have worked with before. It may also involve new ways of working, taking a more experimental approach and relinquishing some control. But don't let that put you off. Like any project, it needs thought and planning, but it's OK to start small and see how it goes.

We've listed some of the key things to think about when planning a Museum of the Intangible in **Section 5**.

Why should I do it?

As with all projects, creating a Museum of the Intangible is not without risks, and there may be various barriers to overcome – institutional fears/reluctance, lack of engagement, time and financial constraints etc. However, while working with ICH may seem daunting, there are huge benefits to be had from setting up your own Museum of the Intangible. These might include:

• developing new partnerships, networks and relationships

• developing innovative ways of working – such as process-based approaches – which prove to be really successful and enjoyable

• widening the scope of your museum's activities to do new and exciting things

• extending engagement with existing audiences and communities, or attracting new ones

• having enlightening conversations and dialogue with a wide range of people

• understanding your collections in new ways.

Do I have to call it a Museum of the Intangible?

We hope you will be inspired by what you read in this toolkit to run your own project based on ICH. We'd love it if you called your project a Museum of the Intangible – but that's up to you. However, if you are inspired by this toolkit, please mention that in any project reports and evaluations – and please let us know!

SECTION 1:
BACKGROUND TO THE MERL'S MUSEUM OF THE INTANGIBLE

About the Museum of English Rural Life

The Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) at the University of Reading is home to a museum, archive and library, and houses the UK's most comprehensive national collection of objects, archives and books relating to the history of food, farming and the countryside. We use our diverse collections to explore how the skills and experiences of farmers and craftspeople, past and present, can help shape our lives now and into the future. We work alongside rural people, local communities and specialist researchers to create displays and activities that engage with important debates about the future of food and the ongoing relevance of the countryside to all our lives.

Find out more: **merl.reading.ac.uk**
or follow us on Twitter: **@TheMERL**

About the Museum of the Intangible

In 2016 The MERL was awarded funding from the Arts Council England Designation Development Fund for the project *Making, Using and Enjoying: The Museum of the Intangible*, which ran 2017–2018. This project explored the potential of ICH and creative and digital practice to improve research and understanding of The MERL's collections and to extend engagement. Makers, creative practitioners, users and academic experts examined selected craft- and farming-related resources from across the museum, library and archive at The MERL. Rather than simply gathering more things, the Museum of the Intangible used living experience to reveal hidden systems of knowledge, bringing people together around collections and using these encounters to spark new ways of thinking and stimulate fresh engagement opportunities.

The *Museum of the Intangible* included the following strands:

- Writing collections summaries of three key sets of material from across the museum, archive and library at The MERL, relating to artist Stanley Anderson, writer H.J. Massingham and artist-writer Dorothy Hartley.
- Running workshops with creative practitioners, academics and other stakeholders based on those key collections to explore some of the ICH connected with them.
- Commissioning a series of creative responses which drew on ICH ideas from a range of creative practitioners, based on discussions had at the workshops – the Museum of the Intangible's exhibits.
- Developing new materials and techniques term lists for use in The MERL's museum and archive catalogues. These are available for use by other museums.
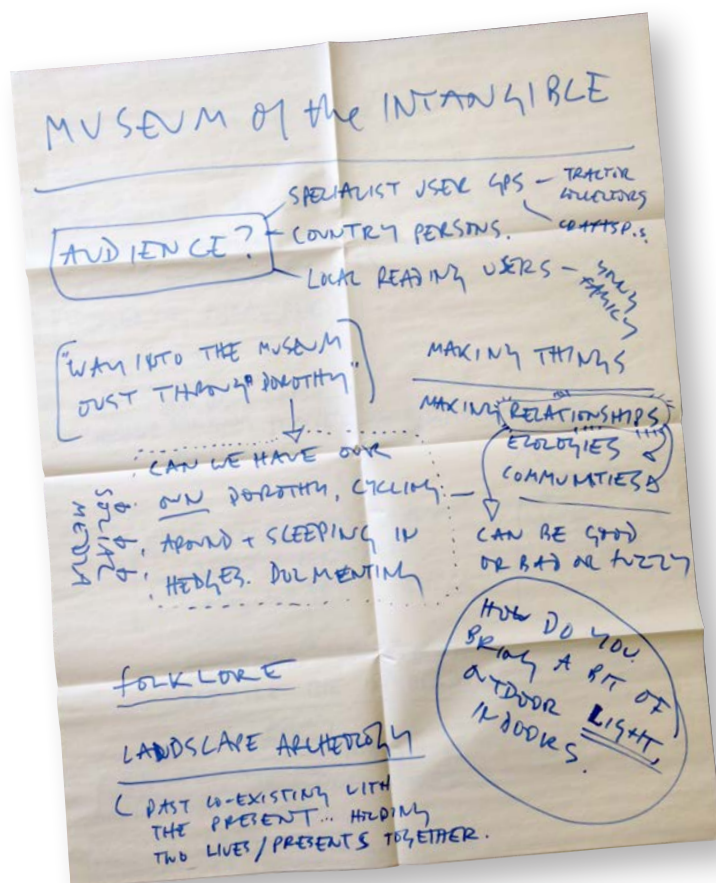
- Carrying out web development work to enable online exhibitions which draw together object, archive and library material.
- Publishing a toolkit designed to help museums and heritage organisations use ICH ideas and creative and digital practices to create their own Museum of the Intangible.
- Holding an academic workshop ('action lab') to set the impact and engagement agenda for a larger research and knowledge-transfer project relating to ICH ideas.

Find out more: **merl.reading.ac.uk/museum-of-the-intangible**

MUSEUM OF THE INTANGIBLE
AND A PAPER ARCHIVE
BRING IT TO LIFE
A CREATIVE RESPONSE
WHO'S IT...
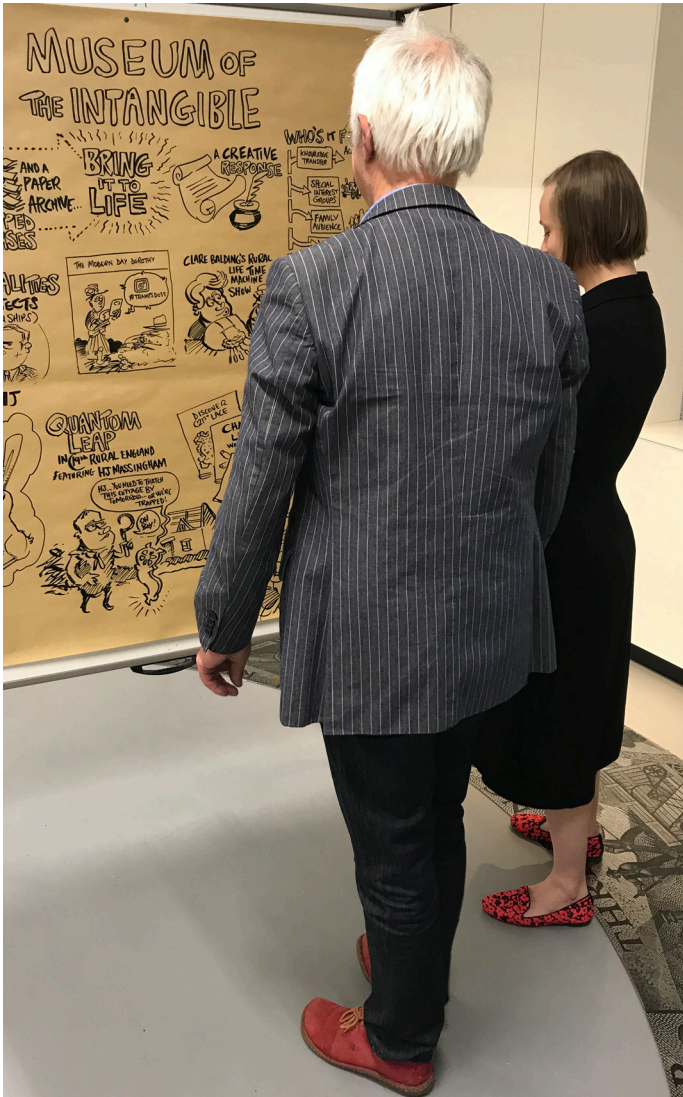
THE MUSEUM OF ENGLISH RURAL LIFE
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The MERL › Communities › Community Projects › Making, Using, Enjoying

MAKING, USING, ENJOYING

As part of the Making, Using and Enjoying: The Museum of the Intangible project, we have invited makers, writers and practitioners to produce a range of creative responses to the MERL's collections as a way of exploring some of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) connected with them.

GEORGINA BARNEY AND KATE GENEVER : THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY FARMING

The Museum of Contemporary Farming is a mass, participatory conversation and artwork on Twitter, which culminated in two events (one on Kate's family farm and one at The MERL), an exhibition, and an ongoing Twitter presence. Georgina acted as the museum's curator, inviting the public to suggest content for a Museum of Contemporary Farming using the hashtag #MuseumContemporaryFarming – be they objects, images, concepts, attitudes etc. The most interesting ideas were selected for an exhibition in the MERL's open stores, alongside a series of 'scratch drawings' made by Kate and inspired by the improvised use of sticks on her farm.

Visit the Museum of Contemporary Farming website
Follow the project on Twitter: @MofCFarming / #MuseumContemporaryFarming

CHIP COLQUHOUN: LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

Chip created a series of vodcasts based on traditional folk tales which celebrate craftspeople and their practices, such as farriery, blacksmithing and charcoal burning. These were inspired by Dorothy Hartley, an artist and author who travelled around the country in the 1930s and 1940s, documenting the rural people and practices she encountered along her way. Two of the episodes involve an apprentice learning some basic skills from a master to explore more deeply some of the rural practices discussed in the folk tales. These episodes feature some of that footage and also include live interactive interviews, where viewers had the chance to ask their own questions.

Watch on the Life of the People Youtube channel and follow on twitter @MERLLife

FELICITY FORD: KNIT A SONG OF SHEPHERDS

Felicity ran a series of knitting workshops at The MERL, designed to share the creative processes of knitting and listening, and to contemplate some of The MERL's objects associated with the history of yarn production. In each session, participants knitted a small project using a specially selected yarn while listening to a related set of sound recordings. Each knitted object and podcast combination was developed in response to a specific object in The MERL – shepherd smocks, a pair of gloves knitted in Shetland, a book about UK silk production, and sheep bells. Short recordings were made at the end of each session to document the participants' discussions, which will be woven into a final, celebratory sound piece.

Visit the Museum of the Intangible page on Felicity's website.

ALEXANDRA HARRIS: AFTER MICHAELMAS

Alex is best known for longer writings and broadcast work. She wrote a short story set in eighteenth-century Sussex, telling the story of a woman's life through the items listed in her will. It was inspired by historic probate inventories and items in the MERL collections which were similar to those found in such inventories.

MELISSA HARRISON: BONE BOBBINS, THATCHING TOOLS AND THE BODGER'S BOY

Melissa is best known for her novels, but was keen to try her hand at poetry and has written three debut poems. Each poem was inspired by a set of objects looked at during the workshop: bone bobbins for lace making; thatching tools; and an extract from the book Made in England, written and illustrated by Dorothy Hartley. The poems will form part of an edited volume to be produced by the MERL's Poet-in-Residence Jack Thacker.

TERESA MURJAS: I, SHEEP

Teresa is working with Jack Thacker, MERL Poet-in-Residence, and partnering with his family farm in Herefordshire to develop an animal-led film project. I-Sheep will capture life from the sheep's-eye perspective, using a Go-Pro to record the sheep's experience. Through this, Teresa will explore how we imagine and claim to understand what an animal is experiencing, how that might inform our relationship with that animal, and what medium of expression can be used to represent that relationship. I-Sheep will culminate in an installation work which will include film, poetry and poetic speech.

HANNAH JAMES AND GERAINT PARFITT

Geraint, one of only a handful of clog-makers in the UK, will make a pair of dancing clogs for Hannah, who will develop a performance based on some of the intangible heritage around clog-making, clog-wearing and clog-dancing. This performance will form the basis of The MERL Annual Lecture on 8th November, 2018 (details coming soon). Hannah will also be creating a short 'how-to' clog dancing tutorial film which will be used as an interactive in the museum. After their use in the real world by Hannah, the clogs will subsequently be accessioned into the museum.

Making, Using and Enjoying is funded by the Arts Council England (ACE) Designation Development Fund. Find out more about the project.

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

SECTION 2:
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH)

What is intangible cultural heritage?

When we think of heritage, we tend to think about physical, tangible 'things' like historic buildings, monuments and museum objects. However, heritage also includes non-physical, intangible 'non-things', like skills, knowledge and practices.

In 2003, UNESCO created the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which defines intangible cultural heritage as:

'the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills – including the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them – that communities, groups and individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage.'

UNESCO typically divides ICH into five 'domains', although these categories are not exhaustive and the boundaries between them are extremely fluid:

- oral traditions
- performing arts
- social practices, rituals and festive events
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- traditional craftsmanship.

Museums Galleries Scotland provides a more accessible definition of ICH:

'The practices, representations and expressions that are central to the lives and identities of communities, groups and individuals. In its many and varied forms, from cultural festivals to beliefs to passing on traditional skills, it is a means by which humans interact with their natural environment, make sense of the world around them and connect contemporary life to that of past generations.'

An even broader view is that ICH covers everything related to heritage that isn't tangible – whether it's particular traditions, skills and practices, or whether it's the knowledge, meanings, memories, identities, relationships, networks, interactions, and cultural contexts in which life is lived.

Whatever definition of ICH is used, communities are at its heart – whether they are defined by a geographic area, a shared cultural or social background, a shared interest or practice, or are linked by their experiences. It is communities who create, carry and transmit ICH – and ICH practices are those which communities deem to be important and worthy of transmitting to future generations.

While we talk about the 'preservation' of tangible heritage, we talk about the 'safeguarding' of intangible heritage. For ICH to be safeguarded, it must be kept alive, remaining relevant to its communities, and being regularly practised and learned within communities and between generations. It cannot be fixed or frozen in a 'pure' form, but must evolve through the generations in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history. And the emphasis is on the transmission of skills, knowledge and meaning, rather than of the end result.

How do we explain ICH to our audiences?

One of the main challenges to creating a Museum of the Intangible is that while audiences (and museum staff!) may be familiar with the ideas encapsulated by the term ICH once it has been explained, they probably aren't familiar with the term itself – i.e. they would recognise the concept but either call it something different, or not call it anything at all. Because ICH is 'lived' rather than consciously defined, terms like 'lived experience', 'living heritage' or 'ways of living' might be more accessible ways of introducing ICH to audiences.

Useful links

UNESCO: Intangible Cultural Heritage
https://ich.unesco.org/

UNESCO: Kit of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
https://ich.unesco.org/en/kit

Museums Galleries Scotland: From First Footing to Faeries, an inventory of Scotland's intangible culture
http://ichscotland.org/

International Journal of Intangible Heritage
http://www.ijih.org/

SECTION 3:
ICH, MUSEUMS AND CREATIVE AND DIGITAL PRACTICE

ICH and museums

The UK is one of only 18 countries in the world which have not ratified the UNESCO ICH convention. This means that there are no national bodies in the UK which are officially responsible for ICH, and so this responsibility has largely fallen to museums. This may seem strange as, by their very nature, museums exist to preserve tangible heritage (i.e. object collections) – but there are many reasons why museums should engage with ICH, as Museums Galleries Scotland explains:

'Museums are places of tangible and intangible heritage that safeguard our identity, our collective memory, our past and our present, and museums are about how we envision our future. Furthermore, museums are spaces of knowledge, where we can celebrate our cultural diversity: they are spaces of encounter and dialogue. Museums also have an educational function and a social role. … intangible heritage is embedded in the whole definition of museums; it's at the heart and essence of what museums are or should be.'

There is a common misconception that ICH is only relevant to museums with ethnographic or social history collections – but ICH is relevant to all museums. When creating your Museum of the Intangible, it may be helpful to think about why and how museums can (and should) engage with ICH. To help us with this toolkit, we asked a wide range of museums those questions and had over sixty responses. Here's what they said …

Why should museums engage with ICH?

Museums are guardians of heritage and culture, in all its forms

Museums are repositories of human experience – both tangible and intangible – and it is their role to promote and preserve heritage and culture. As guardians of the tangible elements of heritage they are, by extension, logical guardians of the intangible.

- *…we hold the tangible, where better to try to capture, share and explore the intangible?....*
- *…they are repositories of cultural memory…*
- *…a museum is part of the world and we must navigate all the hard things that are part of that…*

Museums are guardians of objects which illustrate ICH

Object collections provide a tangible representation of ICH which may otherwise be challenging to represent in a museum. These objects provide a jumping off point from which to explore intangible heritage.

- *…they often have suitable artefacts etc. to illustrate the concept…*
- *…we hold collections that enable people to consider ICH holistically, using objects to prompt questions about what we can't see…*
- *…you can engage with the tools, environments, meanings for/of ICH practice and transmission through museum collections…*

Museums are guardians of objects but it is ICH which gives objects meaning

ICH provides vital contextual information for object collections, with the intangible bringing the tangible to life. Museums are places of knowledge and meaning, and it is ICH which gives objects their meaning. ICH can also help audiences understand how people behave around and use objects.

- *…[ICH] may be an important way to understand objects connected to processes, by reconnecting them to the intangible aspects of their context…*
- *…objects must be situated in their wider cultural context and, indeed, often evoke lived and tactile experiences…*
- *…museums should be about meaning, and collections could lose meaning if ICH is lost…*

Museums are skilled experts

Museums are widely recognised as having the skills, knowledge and resources to look after heritage for future generations, and can share this expertise with communities and other organisations working with ICH.

- *…museums' strengths in education, interpretation, learning & engagement; combined with their breadth & richness of collections…*
- *…museums are meant to be really involved with culture and almost an authority on how it is preserved, exposed and interpreted. This can influence and impact other organisations whose priorities and responsibilities around ICH are probably less specific…*
- *…museums take a long view and are (in principle) 'forever' institutions. With ICH they can provide continuity and support…*

Museums are places of community engagement

Museums are spaces in which to build links with local communities and break down barriers. They can bring communities, audiences and other stakeholders together, and can offer physical spaces for community engagement. They are also places of cultural co-creation.

- ... they are shared spaces ...
- ... a good place to realise that culture is co-produced and not owned/defined by big institutions ...
- ... museums should not just take ICH from communities to preserve it. They should understand it, and help those communities which partake in aspects of ICH to preserve these traditions themselves ....

Museums are places of learning about the world and engaging with new ideas

Museums have existing and engaged audiences who could embrace ICH through museum visits and programming. They are excellent arenas for hands-on educational experiences. Museums are also places for people to explore and discuss new concepts and ideas.

- ... museums encourage other people to get involved, especially younger generations ...
- ... museums are uniquely placed to facilitate access to ICH as part of their wider social and learning agenda ...
- ... participants are often already coming there to engage with tradition and history ...

How can museums engage with ICH?

Work with communities

Communities are central to ICH, so museums must engage with those communities, both inside and outside the museum space. This may take different forms, from community engagement, interdisciplinary projects, partnerships, collaboration and co-production, to seeking advice from communities on how objects should be stored, exhibited and interpreted and encouraging ICH experts into the museum to

demonstrate. Museums should support communities to safeguard their ICH within the community, rather than taking it away to preserve it in the museum, and community groups should be empowered as equal or leading partners with shared decision-making.

Work with other organisations

Museums can work in partnership with other organisations and cultural experts – e.g. other heritage bodies, archives, libraries, folk organisations, education and training organsiations, government departments supporting skills, arts and heritage etc. – to support engagement with and safeguarding of ICH, and act as networking facilitators.

Programming

Programming is an excellent way to engage with ICH, especially when the content is co-curated with communities – through events, exhibitions, live interpretation, demonstrations, performances, knowledge-transfer workshops, residencies, conferences, talks etc. Small-scale/micro-engagements can be just as impactful as large-scale/long-term engagements.

Provide physical space

Museums can provide physical space for communities and groups to run their own projects and to share their knowledge, as well as using spaces creatively to support ICH engagement.

Collections management

New approaches to collections management can ensure that ICH is enshrined within the museum's remit. Traditional object-based collections management and curation policies and practices can be

expanded to incorporate ICH, particularly around collecting policies – either with a specific policy for collecting the intangible, or to ensure that collections and archives provide evidence of ICH. Collections management systems can also be expanded to record ICH.

Document ICH practices

Museums can provide opportunities to document, record, and collect ICH practices using tangible media such as oral history, film, photography etc. to share these with the public both now and in the future. However, it must be remembered that this is a way of preserving a tangible representation of ICH at a particular point in time, rather than a way of safeguarding ICH itself, and the two should not be confused. These documentation techniques can also be used to provide further contextual information about objects in the collections, recording the skills, knowledge and practices associated with particular objects to make sense of those objects now and for the future.

Interpretation

Audiences can be engaged with the concept of ICH through the display and interpretation of objects. Objects can be used as a way to interpret the intangible and to act as a discussion point. Museums can think more self-consciously about ICH when writing labels and other forms of interpretation to make it more explicit.

Raise awareness of ICH

Museums can raise awareness of the concept of ICH with their audiences, and work with communities and other organisations to change the public perception of ICH so that it recognised and valued in the same way as tangible heritage. Museums can not only celebrate ICH, but also make its significance and vulnerability clear. Museums are seen as an authority on how culture is preserved and interpreted and can therefore influence and impact on other organisations, to encourage funding and support.

A note about museums and safeguarding ICH

While museums may be the custodians of supporting material relating to ICH, and may be able to support the safeguarding of some aspects of ICH, it is asking a lot of museums to take on the responsibility for ensuring that the skills, knowledge and practices are lived and passed on to future generations. This is too big a task for museums alone! Museums also need to be wary of taking ICH out of its communities, and mindful of the fact that the 'museumisation' of one practice may lead to the impression that it is of more value than another which has not made it into the museum.

We are not proposing that a Museum of the Intangible is a way of safeguarding an ICH practice – although if you have the resources it might be something you would want to consider. Instead, we are suggesting that the Museum of the Intangible approach is a way to explore, engage with, celebrate and disseminate aspects of ICH.

ICH and creative and digital practice

At The MERL we chose to use creative and digital practice in our Museum of the Intangible as a way of engaging with ICH ideas.

Creative practice is a wide ranging-term which covers anything from the visual arts (painting, sculpture, film-making, photography, animation etc.), auditory arts (music, spoken word etc.), literary arts (poetry, fiction etc.) and performing arts (dance, drama etc.) to a range of other creative industries (e.g. advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games, crafts, design, designer fashion, TV and radio, publishing, and software/digital media).

ICH is about much more than providing inspiration for creative practice – both ICH and creative practice are ways of interpreting the world around us, to the extent that, in many cases, creative practice itself is a form of ICH. Creativity is one of the defining characteristics of ICH – it is constantly recreated by communities in response to the world around them and continually evolves through the generations. And like ICH, creative practice is often about meaning, memory and identity. Creative practice is therefore an ideal tool through which to explore and interpret ICH ideas.

Digital practice provides a wide range of tools and technologies to engage with ICH ideas in a variety of different ways: documenting ICH, aiding the transmission of skills and knowledge, facilitating collaboration between individuals, groups and communities, encouraging conversation and dialogue around ICH, presenting and interpreting ICH and responses to it etc. Digital practice can also provide opportunities for engaging people with and sharing the work of your Museum of the Intangible – and your Museum of the Intangible may exist as a digital entity.

When it comes to digital practice, many useful skills are transferrable, such as creative writing, photo editing, filmmaking, and data analytics. These may be learned through training or by trial and error. The Museums Computer Group mailing list may be useful if you are keen to specialise further. The #MuseumHour discussion on Twitter (every Monday evening at 8pm) also covers many digital topics.

SECTION 4:
CASE STUDIES

At The MERL we worked with a range of creative practitioners to create exhibits for our Museum of the Intangible, in response to our collections. We ran three collections-based workshops to which selected creative practitioners, along with subject specialists, academics from the University of Reading and elsewhere, and other stakeholders were invited.

At the start of the Museum of the Intangible project we identified three key sets of material from across the museum, archive and library – relating to artist Stanley Anderson, writer H. J. Massingham and artist-writer Dorothy Hartley. Drawing on objects, artwork, books, photographs and other archival material, we identified common themes and topics from these collections on which to base each workshop. The workshops essentially brought together diverse groups of people around interesting things to have exploratory conversations about some of the ICH connected with the collections, and to provide inspiration for the creative practitioners. At the end of the workshops, the creative practitioners were given a budget and invited to develop a proposal for a creative response.

The workshop participants included: people that The MERL had previously worked with, project team contacts, people with specific expertise The MERL wanted to work with, and people found online when looking for a particular type of person/skillset.

The workshops and exhibits are outlined in more detail below. An * indicates that work is still ongoing at the time of writing.

Workshop 1: Showing

This workshop was largely focussed on heritage craft practice and visual and contemporary art, exploring collections relating to thatching, rake making and sheep. The session was deliberately open in format and discussions were broad-ranging, highly informative, and often surprising and revealing. Participants included a handtool expert, a bodger and scythesman, an artist-farmer, a contemporary artist, a wool and sound artist, a film maker, a film student, and a trustee of the Heritage Crafts Association.

Felicity Ford aka KNITSONIK (Wool and Sound Artist): Knit a Song of Stitches

Felicity ran a series of four knitting workshops at The MERL: *Knit a Song of Shepherds*, *Knit a Song of Shetland*, *Knit a Song of Silkworms* and *Knit a Song of Sheep Bells*. These workshops were designed to open up and share the dual creative processes of knitting and listening, and to contemplate more deeply artefacts and texts relating to the history of yarn production. In each session, participants knitted a small project using a specially selected yarn and listened to a related set of sound recordings. Each knitted object and podcast combination was developed in response to a specific object or set of objects in The MERL – shepherd smocks, a pair of gloves knitted in Shetland, UK silk production, and sheep bells. Short recordings were made at the end of each session to document the participants' discussions, which were woven into a final, celebratory sound piece.
www.knitsonik.com/merl-making-using-and-enjoying-the-museum-of-the-intangible

Kate Genever (Artist-Farmer), Georgina Barney (Contemporary Artist): The Museum of Contemporary Farming

The Museum of Contemporary Farming (MCF) is a mass, participatory conversation and artwork on Twitter. It culminated in two events and an exhibition, as well as an ongoing Twitter presence. Georgina acted as the museum's curator, inviting the public to suggest 'things' to include in a Museum of Contemporary Farming using the hashtag #MuseumContemporaryFarming. These may be real things that are too large or expensive (e.g. a combine harvester), or too simple or boring (e.g. a piece of string) to include in a real museum – or non-physical 'things' like images, ideas, attitudes or concepts (e.g. trust). The most interesting ideas were selected for an exhibition in The MERL's open stores, alongside a series of 'scratch drawings' made by Kate and inspired by the improvised use of sticks on her farm. The first event took place on Kate's farm, where participants had the opportunity to walk around the farm, discuss ideas of museums, farming and heritage, and share a meal together. The second event took place at The MERL, at which selected artists were invited to present their ideas for the MCF to the public and debate what should be included.
www.georginabarney.com/mcf
@MofCFarming
#MuseumContemporaryFarming
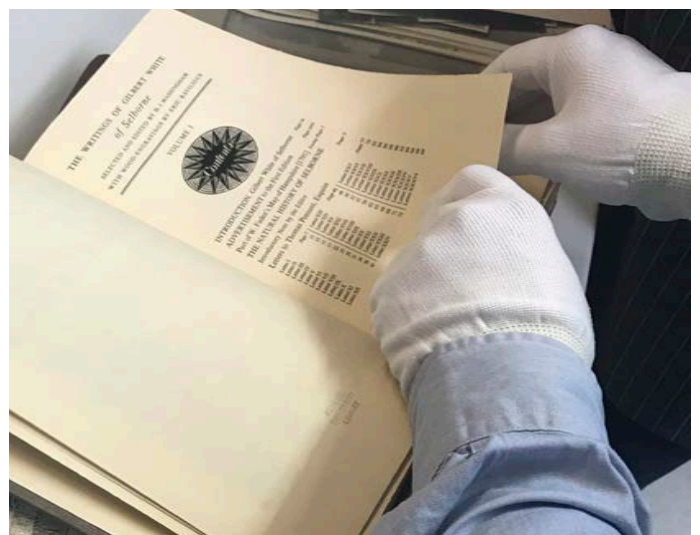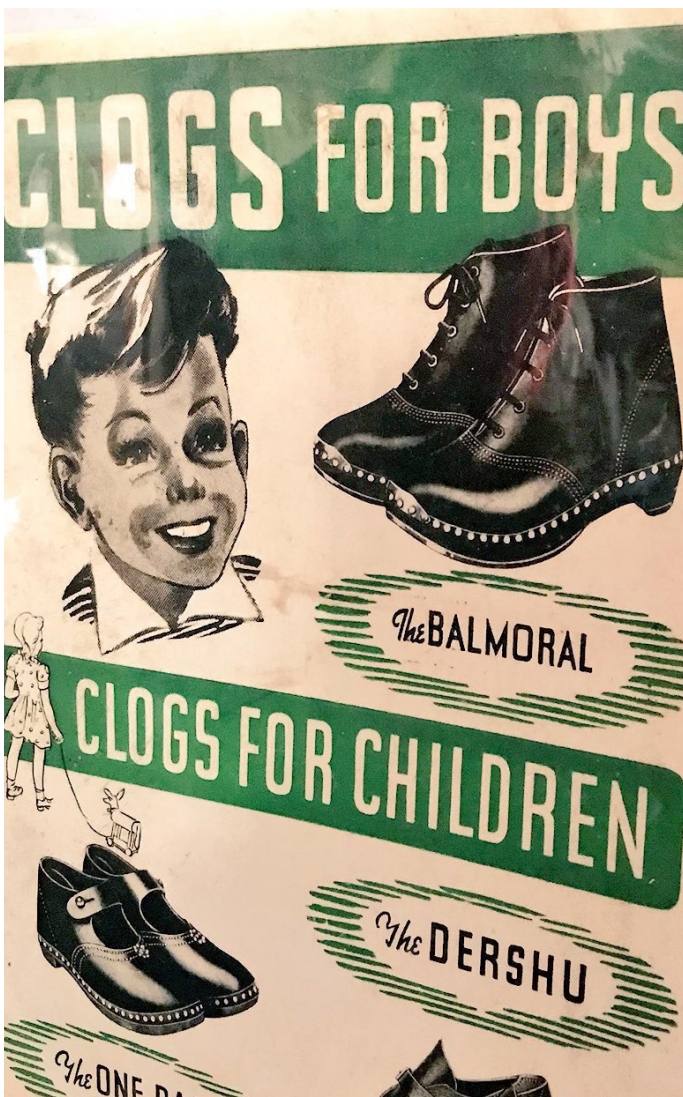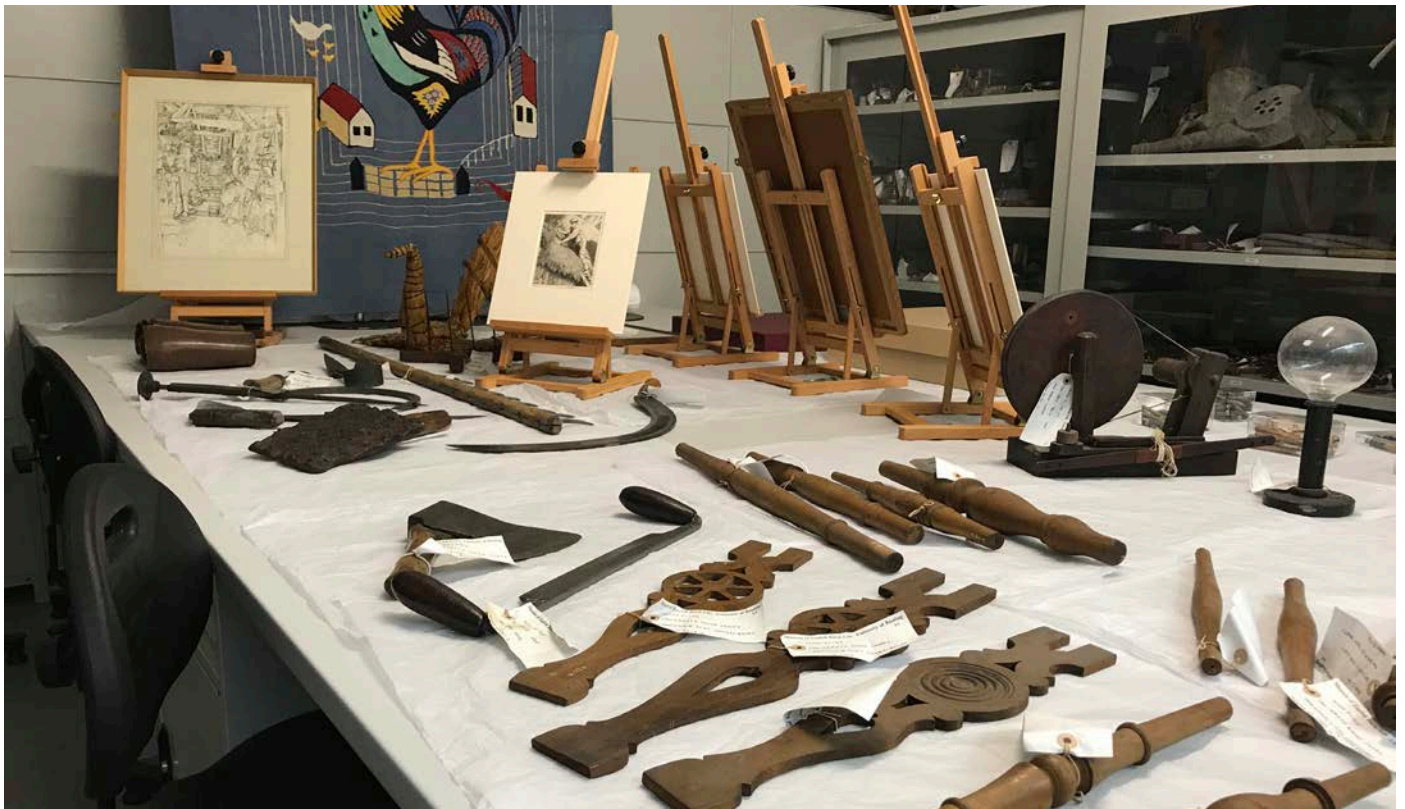
Teresa Murjas (Associate Professor in Film, Theatre and Television): i-Sheep *

Teresa worked with Jack Thacker, MERL Poet-in-Residence, and partnered with his family farm in Herefordshire to develop an animal-led film project. i-Sheep captures life from the sheep's-eye perspective, using a Go-Pro to record the sheep's experience in order to explore how we imagine and claim to understand what an animal is experiencing, how that might inform our relationship with that animal, and what medium of expression can be used to represent that relationship. i-Sheep will culminate an installation work which will include film, poetry and poetic response.

Workshop 2: Telling

This workshop was largely focussed on literary and historical approaches, exploring collections relating to thatching, lace making and chair making. The session was more focussed in format than the first, drawing on extracts from Massingham and Hartley's works as a jumping-off point. Again, the discussions were broad-ranging, highly informative, and often high level and theoretical as well as grounded and practical. This session as recorded in two live drawings by cartoonist and graphic recorder Chris Shipton (resulting images can be seen on the cover and on page 3). Participants included an author, a cultural historian/literary critic, a lace and folklore specialist, an anthropologist, a furniture designer, a poet/lecturer in English, and a storyteller.

Chip Colquhoun (Storyteller): *Life of the People*

Chip created a series of seven vodcasts based on traditional folk tales which celebrate craftspeople and their practices, such as farriery, blacksmithing and charcoal burning. These were inspired by Dorothy Hartley, an artist and author who travelled around the country in the 1930s and 1940s, documenting the rural people and practices she encountered along her way. The Stories of the People episodes were filmed at The MERL and recount a traditional folk tale, chosen for their resonance with trades captured in The MERL collections. For the Work of the People episodes, Chip and his 'apprentice' Myah spent the day with a practising craftsperson, with Myah trying her hand at the crafts. These episodes feature some of that footage and also include live interactive interviews, where viewers had the chance to ask their own questions. The vodcasts are available on a dedicated YouTube channel.
tinyurl.com/lifeofthepeople
@MERLlife

Melissa Harrison (Author): *Bone Bobbins*, *Thatching Tools* and *The Bodger's Boy* (3 poems) *

Melissa is best known for her novels, but was keen to try her hand at poetry and has written three debut poems. Each poem was inspired by a set of objects looked at during the workshop: bone bobbins for lace making; thatching tools; and an extract from the book Made in England, written and illustrated by Dorothy Hartley. The poems will form part of an edited volume to be produced by The MERL Poet-in-Residence Jack Thacker.

Alexandra Harris (Author, Cultural Historian, Literary Critic, and Professor of English): *After Michaelmas* *

Alex is best known for longer writings and broadcast work. She wrote a short story set in eighteenth-century Sussex, telling the story of a woman's life through the items she has listed in her will. It was inspired by historic probate inventories and items in The MERL collections which were similar to those recorded on such inventories. Discussions are ongoing about the most appropriate medium through which to make this work available to the wider public.

Workshop 3: Doing

This workshop took a different and more targeted direction to connect themes of making, performance and collecting, and focussed on clog making. The session took place at the workshop of clog maker Geraint Parfitt at St Fagans National Museum of History and involved clog dancer and musician Hannah James, as well as Rhiannon Thomas (Learning, Participation and Interpretation Manager at St Fagans), Gareth Beech (Curator at St Fagans) and Jack Thacker (MERL Poet-in-Residence).

Hannah James (clog dancer) and Geraint Parfitt (clog maker): Stepping out of Time

The MERL has several pairs of working clogs in the collection, which either have a known maker but no history of use (i.e. they were made specifically for the collection) or a history of use but no known maker. Geraint, one of only a handful of clog-makers in the UK, will make a pair of dancing clogs for Hannah, who will develop a performance based on some of the ICH around clog-making, clog-wearing and clog-dancing. She will also create a short 'how-to' clog dancing tutorial film which will be used as an interactive in the museum. After their use in the real world by Hannah, the clogs will later be accessioned into the museum as vessels of both ICH experience and material heritage.

Felicity Ford aka KNITSONIK:
Knit a Song of Stitches

Had you heard of ICH?

No – [but it is] really exciting to know that there is an official discourse that recognises and celebrates the value of craft, making and responsive processes to museum object collections.

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

... For me the exciting part of the objects is their lived memory and connections with our real messy lives. I understand how important it is to preserve the objects for posterity, but one thing I welcomed about this commission was the opportunity to engage with the collections in ways that didn't involve white gloves and special appointments... I especially enjoyed looking at the things relating to the history of shepherding... I'm always thinking about that when I am knitting with wool.

What inspired your response?

... I thought about objects relating to the agricultural production of yarns here in the UK and how those objects might be explored through knitting and sound. The relaxed attention required by knitting and its soothing, repetitive action is an ideal context into which to introduce sounds and sound recordings that require attentive listening... What I was thinking about was engagement through making, listening and talking. Once you have knitted a sheep bell and listened to recordings of sheep bells, and considered things like the angles and corners in the construction and shape of a sheep bell, it holds a different significance: it becomes a contemporary object with connections to the here and now, to what you did last weekend and were thinking about...

What was the most successful part of the project for you?

... One of the most interesting workshops for me was the one in which we were working with Lullingstone Silk. This silk was grown and reeled in the UK at Lullingstone Silk Farm, and I had to swiftly learn all the skills to turn it into handspun yarn. I was up very late spinning the fibres ready for the workshop, but then playing my recordings of my own silk worm colony (made in 2014) and reading from Lady Zoe Hart Dyke's book [about the farm] (held in The MERL collection) the silk took on a really special significance. We had some fantastic conversations about colonialism, the cost of producing silk, the complex relationship between monarchism and silk production... and we made bracelets because silk, frankly, is like jewellery. The story of Lullingstone Silk Farm is a really interesting part of the history of British agriculture and for me it was a great success that this project highlighted the history of this piece of rural English life. And also revived some practical skills around the preparation of silk fibres for hand knitting purposes!

What was the most challenging part?

Difficulty with timelines due to other commitments and being really ambitious and complex. I spent more time on this project than I had originally budgeted for – for example, preparing all the silk yarns by hand; researching...; writing all the knitting patterns... etc.

What have you learned?

- **What have you learned from the experience about working with digital practice?**
  It's been really interesting seeing how people have reframed and shared and celebrated the workshops and what we made together through social media channels – especially Instagram.
- **How will working with digital practice influence your creative practice?**
  The same thing I always learn: budget even more time than I thought was necessary for digitally editing sounds and nurturing relationships formed online through doing creative work together.
- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  This project has just refocussed my ongoing interest in museums as really exciting spaces in which there is currently a lot of opportunity for developing thoughtful, process-led work that explores relationships between responses and objects, past and present, subjectivity and history etc.

Kate Genever and Georgina Barney:
The Museum of Contemporary Farming

Had you heard of ICH?

KG: Yes – but I didn't call it that… I would say 'the life around a thing'.

GB: No – [but I was] interested – and in a way it seems obvious and timely.

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

KG: Interesting and confusing. I love objects, but was sad that the 'life around a thing' is missing and this provides a vacuum to romanticise things and lives.

GB: I've long been interested in The MERL collections, although also find many of the objects strange and alien, and hard to access without knowing their use and meanings.

What inspired your response?

KG: We were interested in how museums are full of dead things removed from life. Through discussion we knew we wanted to reach a wide diverse audience, develop a participatory piece on Twitter, [and] work with other artists/farmers…

GB: We wanted to reveal the 'real farmer' behind 'Shepherd Barbie' (the idea that The MERL founders had collected all the parts for a shepherd but missed the shepherd himself).

What was the most successful part of the project for you?

KG: Our collaboration has been really good. Meeting and talking to different people in the flesh.

GB: Three things! 1. opportunity to work closely with Kate Genever 2. opportunity to work closely with museum professionals at The MERL and hopefully help them reflect on digital and intangible practice 3. bringing a group of excellent artists together with great ideas about farming…

What was the most challenging part?

KG: Twitter. I was new to it and I am cynical of it, but was interested in if it was possible to create a question or space where people would create new content and respond rather than just sharing other content. This happened but, as with everything, it is limited.

GB: Working at a long distance from The MERL and working with busy museum professionals.

What have you learned?

- **What have you learned about ICH?**
  GB: It is the relationships between objects and stories that matters and produces meaning.
- **What have you learned about working with museums?**
  KG: I am interested in how a museum can be a catalyst for work off-site rather than a place to focus.

- **What have you learned about working with digital practice?**
  GB: Conversations matter – digital practice needs to relate to 'real world' conversations and objects.
- **How will ICH influence your creative practice?**
  GB: I would like to programme more events to build upon what we've learned.
- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  KG: I like working with them and this commission further confirmed my belief that contemporary arts practice can create a new conversation and bring new audiences and viewpoints to collections.
- **How will working with digital practice influence your creative practice?**
  KG: I would try again, and think hard about how it can bring knowledge and audiences together. There is a place for it, but we need to keep asking ourselves what audiences do we want and what do we want those audiences for and why?

Top tips for other museums and/or creative practitioners?

KG: Abandon what you think you know!

Kate Genever and Georgina Barney:
The Museum of Contemporary Farming

Chip Colquhoun: Life of the People

Had you heard of ICH?

Yes – heritage that can only be passed on through interactions with others.

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

Fascination with the professions and lifestyles of the past, but also their interests – and how, even as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the spirit of preservation was blooming.

What inspired your response?

I was inspired by Dorothy Hartley's attempts to visit rural practitioners of endangered crafts to experience, document, and raise greater awareness of them. The intention of my creative response was to mirror Hartley's approach through today's media ... I considered that, in Hartley's time, many practitioners were still young – so I hoped to document both the voices of experience and fresh insights for ICH crafts by recording a 'guest apprentice' being taught by ICH practitioners ... The idea of creating 'Stories of the People' came about because of my work as a storyteller – itself an ICH craft – and thus linking all the various strands of the project through folklore ... I felt confident that I would find many folk tales with ICH craftspeople as the main protagonists. I wasn't wrong!

What was the most successful part?

I expect the most positive part is still to come: I'm very much looking forward to recording our guest apprentice working alongside our guest practitioners, and hosting the live interviews.

What was the most challenging part?

Not sure there's been one yet!

What have you learned?

- **What have you learned about ICH?**
  It's more inherent, and prevalent, than people realise.
- **What have you learned about working with museums?**
  They've always got something on.
- **What have you learned about working with digital practice?**
  I've been expanding my knowledge of the various tools out there to make digital practice simpler.
- **How will ICH influence your creative practice?**
  I've developed my repertoire, and its potential relevance to modern audiences.
- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  I'll consider social media timetables earlier.
- **How will working with digital practice influence your creative practice?**
  I'll be making more use of scheduling platforms.

Top tips for other museums and/or creative practitioners?

Projects like this are a great way to appeal to new audiences.

Teresa Murjas:
i-Sheep

Had you heard of ICH?

Yes – I'd done quite a lot of reading connected to UNESCO's evolving definitions and practices of categorisation ... and have also been very interested as a theatre and performance scholar in the practices that have been identified as ICH over the years (e.g. mevlevi sema ceremony, debate around bullfighting etc.) ...

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

I had a completely brilliant time and was in my element. I enjoyed handling the materials. I enjoyed thinking about the process of handling them and about why they had been chosen.

What inspired your response?

1. Handling objects connected with sheep farming in The MERL collections [and] wearing gloves to do so. Something about the conventions for touching these objects that I was constrained by remains very important and suggestive in terms of creative practice. 2. Reading published articles in which Dorothy Hartley endows, through her storytelling, animals and objects (e.g. a scarecrow) with emotions, voices, 'characters' etc. These actors are animated and enter the realm of performance.

What was the most successful part?

I'm still working on it, but am particularly enjoying the ways in which it is enabling me to establish relationships and connections that wouldn't otherwise arise (e.g. with poet Jack Thacker, ...with colleagues who attended the workshop and the overall project organisers).

What was the most challenging part?

As in all creative practice that involves relationships and connections, the work takes time, but I've never known this to be any other way.

What have you learned?

- **What have you learned about ICH?**
  It's a vitally important concept.
- **What have you learned about working with museums?**
  They are places in which highly creative and inspiring relationships can be formed.
- **What have you learned about working with digital practice?**
  It enables the formation of relationships and the exchange of ideas, and its visibility is reliant on tangible factors and frameworks.
- **How will ICH influence your creative practice?**
  They are already central to my thinking and creative practice and I have been enormously inspired by this project.
- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  It has strengthened my resolve to continue working with museums.
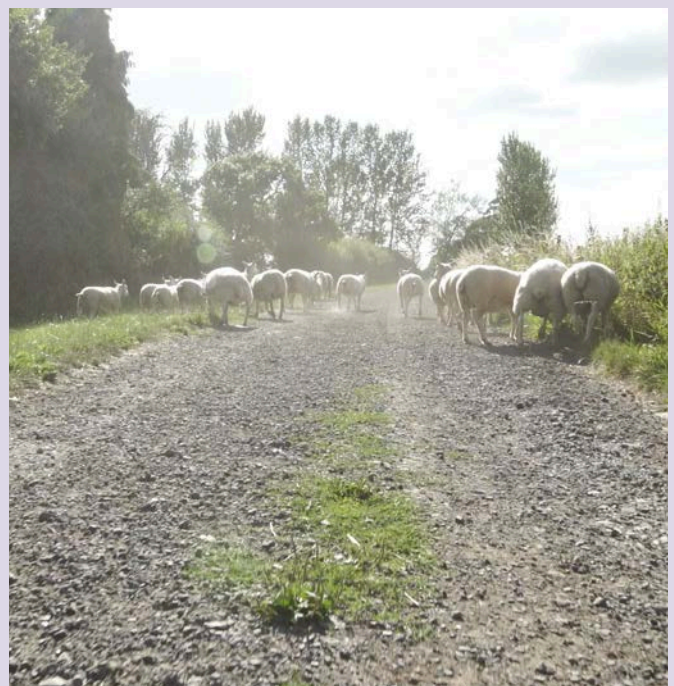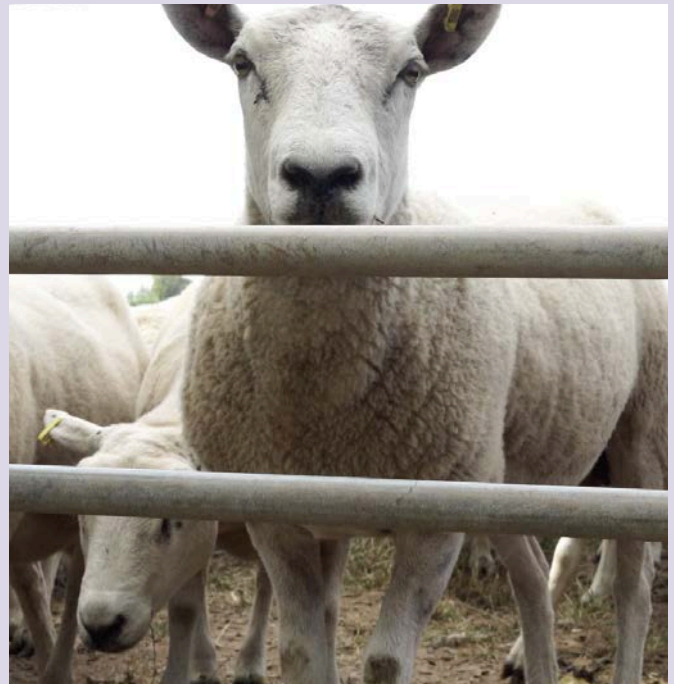
- **How will working with digital practice influence your creative practice?**
  The form that the creative practice will take is likely to be digital and so this idea is central.

Top tips for other museums and/or creative practitioners?

To museums: People who work in museums and people who make creative work have a lot in common (some people do both) and all of them are creative. Making time and space for them to interact and collaborate, drawing on collections to co-create and co-curate, is really important.

To creative practitioners: Draw on the expertise of museum professionals, talk to them, ask them questions and listen carefully.

Melissa Harrison:
Bone Bobbins, Thatching Tools and The Bodger's Boy

Had you heard of ICH?

No – I was interested and impressed.

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

It felt like a privilege to see more than was on public display.

What was the most successful part?

Being prompted to produce work I wouldn't otherwise have made. Learning about historical objects from experts.

What have you learned?

- **What have you learned about ICH?**
  This is now a key concept in my imagination.
- **What have you learned about working with museums?**
  Interesting and rewarding but more bureaucracy/paperwork than other institutions/clients.
- **How will ICH influence your creative practice?**
  I can see this influencing future writing projects.
- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  I would do this again.

Top tips for other museums and/or creative practitioners?

Some people may prefer to encounter collections by themselves or with one curator rather than in a group.

Alexandra Harris:
After Michaelmas

Had you heard of ICH?

No – great concept; extremely abstract and off-putting name.

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

Superbly presented, wonderfully rich, and thank goodness it all exists.

What inspired your response?

Workshop discussion about object collections made me think about inventories as life-stories. I tried to think my way back into the life of a woman who owned similar objects in the eighteenth century.

What was the most successful part?

Feeling that there was value in even the most tentative trial-and-error cultural response. It prompted me into more research than I would have done for a straight historical research essay.

What have you learned?

- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  I'd like to do more. Starting from single objects gave me a real sense of focus.

Hannah James (with Geraint Parfitt):
Stepping out of Time

Had you heard of ICH?

I hadn't heard the term ICH before, which is very strange because it's basically what my career is built on! I will definitely use the term in future.

What was your reaction to The MERL collections?

I really enjoyed looking through The MERL collections… My research in the library was also very important, I found the photo archive very inspiring and was even able to use some of the photographs as part of the piece.

What inspired your response?

The piece was inspired a lot by the emotional reaction I had to seeing the clogs at The MERL locked away in a cabinet. I'm used to seeing clogs being worn and danced in, so it was strange to see them so static and out of reach (although I do understand the importance of preserving pieces like this). My response was also inspired by my time spent with Geraint Parfitt, the clog maker – seeing his workshop and listening to his stories and knowledge, as well as watching him work and hearing the noises of his process. I wanted to set this life and noise and energy against the stillness and quiet of the museum, and tell the story of a pair of clogs and the lives that had brought them into existence and lived in them, and also to raise questions about how we treat historical objects as well as the intangible parts of culture.

What was the most successful part of the project for you?

I was very pleased with the way the piece turned out and the response from the audience to the performance. I found the project strangely emotional and I hoped that this would come through in the performance, which many people said it did. I also wanted the piece to highlight the downsides of shutting objects away and trying to freeze them in time and how this isn't always a helpful way to allow a tradition to thrive, and I feel that the piece succeeded in this way.

What was the most challenging part?

Dancing in the new clogs was actually quite a challenge as they need some adjustment to improve the fit. Also, I wouldn't usually perform in such a new pair of shoes – I normally bed a new pair in for quite a few months before I wear them on stage, to soften the leather and to get used to the shape of the sole and how that allows me to move. It's very unique to each pair of clogs.

What have you learned?

- **What have you learned about ICH?**
  This project has made me more aware of the importance of passing on traditional skills and crafts… It's made me want to do more to pass on my skills and, long term, to try to set up some sort of infrastructure to make it easier for people to learn clog dancing.

- **What have you learned about working with museums?**
  It's been an interesting challenge working on an artistic piece in an academic environment. I found the museum and what it had to offer a very inspiring place at first, but after a while I found that the atmosphere wasn't particularly helpful to the creative process… so once I had my basic story and framework in place I found it easier to create the work from my own studio.

- **What have you learned about working with digital practice?**
  This piece gave me a good opportunity to further develop my skills with ableton – the software I use for looping and sampling. I have never used found sounds or spoken word recordings in a show before and it has really enhanced my ability to tell a story.

- **How will ICH influence you creative practice?**
  ICH IS my creative practice! All of my work is rooted in traditional English music and dance, and the ICH of England will continue to influence all aspects of my work.

- **How will working with museums influence your creative practice?**
  This has been a very positive experience for me and I found having a very strong theme to work with made it very easy to create a strong and thought-provoking work. I would definitely like to work with museums again in the future and this project has also inspired me to create some other short, story-like pieces based on different themes.

- **Top tips for other museums and/or creative practitioners**
  I think these collaborations are a fantastic thing and would recommend them to any artist wanting a new source of inspiration, especially artists working within folk and traditional music. It's great to go 'back to the source' and really think about our culture and tradition and how we are handling it and then respond creatively.

SECTION 5:
PLANNING YOUR MUSEUM OF THE INTANGIBLE

As with any project, a Museum of the Intangible will require thought and planning. You'll already be familiar with many of the things that you need to think about, but here are some useful things to consider based on our experiences and learning at The MERL.

What heritage you are working with

Before you start your Museum of the Intangible, you need to consider what heritage you're going to be working with. Are you concentrating on a physical aspect of heritage, such as a particular subset of your object collections, and using ICH ideas to explore that further – or are you focusing on an intangible aspect of heritage, such as a particular practice or tradition, which may or may not be supported by your object collections? It's also important to think about who is setting the parameters for the project and determining the focus. Is the project instigated by the museum, or has it come about in response to approaches from practitioners, artists, researchers or others?

Who will be involved

At the outset of the project you need to identify the key stakeholders and participants – both within the museum and externally. A Museum of the Intangible may be quite a challenging concept to grasp initially, so you need to ensure you have institutional buy-in at all levels, ensure that everyone knows what their involvement will be, and keep everyone informed as the project develops. Key stakeholders/participants may include:

- museum staff involved in the delivery of the project (this may include staff involved in: curation/collections management, finance, administration, front of house, public programming, marketing, social media, website etc.)
- museum staff at management level
- digital experts (both internally and externally)
- ICH communities (groups and individuals)
- creative practitioners
- audiences (who are your target audiences – are you looking to attract new audiences or extend engagement with existing audiences?)
- others (e.g. researchers, staff from other museums/institutions, staff from other organisations etc.).

A Museum of the Intangible will probably also involve partnerships with people your museum may not have worked with before, so you will need to think about how you will set about identifying the individuals within those stakeholder groups – particularly with reference to ICH communities and creative practitioners. They may be:

- groups/practitioners the museum already works with
- targeted groups/practitioners the museum would like to work with
- recommendations from other groups/practitioners
- open calls via social media, newsletters, tender and other channels
- reaction to approaches from groups/practitioners.

Useful links

Paul Hamlyn Foundation: Communities and Museums as Active Partners: Emerging Learning from the Our Museum initiative
http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Our-Museum-emerging-learning.pdf

How your Museum of the Intangible will be run

A Museum of the Intangible may take the form of a traditional community engagement project, or it may involve new ways of working, perhaps taking a more experimental or co-creative one, and even relinquishing some control. You will need to consider how yours will be run and who the driving force will be. Is it:

- museum-led?
- community-led?
- creative practitioner-led?
- researcher-led?
- a partnership project between groups of these?

Any project of this nature is likely to be a partnership of sorts, but it is important to establish whether one party is leading, or if you are working equally. It is also important to be clear on how decisions will be taken and who will be taking them.

What the outputs and outcomes will be

You need to establish at the start what the outputs or exhibits of the Museum of the Intangible will be. At The MERL, we left this very open, saying we wanted to commission six creative responses, but leaving the nature of those responses to be determined by the flow of the workshops we ran and the reactions of the creative practitioners we worked with. You also need to think about what the outcomes will be for each of the participant groups, i.e. museum, ICH community, creative practitioners and audiences.

Project budgets and paying creative practitioners

It is important to have a clear budget established at the beginning, which takes into account all project activity: from the research and planning stages, through to the delivery, and to the dissemination and evaluation at the end. For projects which involve a wide range of participants, which your Museum of the Intangible may do, you need to consider who is and isn't being paid for their time so that you can ensure that payment is fair and that no one is being exploited or taken advantage of.

Many creative practitioners are self-employed and it is essential that they are fairly remunerated for their time and labour, as well as for any creative output. This includes consultancy work, project planning and development, exhibition fees, all aspects of the delivery of activity (set up, execution, clear up), and any other time spent. The Artists' Union of England provides guidelines on recommended rates of pay for visual artists, based on length of experience, but these can also serve as basic guidelines for other types of creative practitioner. N.B. These rates are for guidance purposes, and creative practitioners are entitled to negotiate their own rates.

Useful links

Paying Artists: Quick Guide to Budgets
www.payingartists.org.uk/project/quick-guide-to-budgets/

Artists' Union of England: Rates of Pay Guidelines (2017)
www.artistsunionengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ AUE-RATES-OF-PAY-GUIDELINES-2017.pdf

Scottish Artists' Union: Rates of Pay Guidance (2016–17)
www.sau.org.uk/documents/updated_rates_of_pay_ guidance_201617.pdf

Paying Artists: List of other sector pay guidance
www.payingartists.org.uk/project/other-sector-pay-guidance/

a-n/AIR: Guidance on fees and day rates for visual artists (2017)
https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Guidance_ on_fees_and_day_rates_for_visual_artists_2017.pdf

Commissioning, contracts and intellectual property rights

Rather than setting a brief for the creative practitioners for our Museum of the Intangible, we gave each creative practitioner a budget and asked them to develop a proposal for their exhibit. The proposals were then refined through discussions and, once both sides were happy, the contracts were issued in accordance with our financial processes and procedures at the University of Reading.

The Northern Ireland Museums Council's Toolkit for Museums and the Creative Industries (particularly Guidance Sheet 4) gives lots of practical guidance on creating a written agreement and what it should cover (including deliverables, timescales, money, roles, ownership, intellectual property rights, exclusivity, branding etc.), as well as links to many other resources.

Useful links

Northern Ireland Museums Council: Museum and Creative Industries Toolkit
www.nimc.co.uk/what-we-do/guidance-and-information/museum- and-creative-industries-toolkit/

The Artists' Information Company: The Contracts Toolkit
www.itool.co.uk/contracts/

Working with creative practitioners

There are lots of useful sources of advice out there for working with artists and other creative practitioners. The biggest thing we learned from our Museum of the Intangible experience was that life gets in the way and things always take longer than expected. It may sound obvious but it's definitely something to be aware of, especially when working with lots of different people, as it can take a long time to coordinate everyone. We worked with eight creative practitioners, many of whom were in turn working with other people to create their exhibits, and things happen – people have other work and projects, they have personal commitments, they get ill etc. So being honest, open and flexible about these things was really key to the success of our project.

Useful links

Museums Association: Working with artists
www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/working-with-artists

Heritage Lottery Fund: Museums and artist working together https://www.hlf.org.uk/community/general-discussions/museums-and-artists-working-together

Visual Arts South West: Notes on artists working in museum and heritage settings
www.vasw.org.uk/features/artists-in-museum-heritage-settings-notes.php

Museums and Galleries month: Working with Artists Toolkit
www.engage.org/downloads/MGM_Working_with_Artists_Toolkit.pdf

Audience interaction and engagement

You need to think about how, when and where audiences will engage with the Museum of the Intangible and its exhibits – and be sure to involve all the relevant staff in these discussions (e.g. curation, public programming, web support etc.) Some useful questions to think about are:

• Will the exhibits be physical, digital or both?

• Will the exhibits be tangible (e.g. an installation, an exhibition, a film), intangible (e.g. a performance, an event) or both?

• Where will audiences interact with the exhibits – in the museum, in other places outside the museum, online, or combinations of these?

• Will the exhibits be one-offs (such as single performance) or available more frequently (a series of events) or on a longer-term basis (an installation)?

• Will the exhibits be accessed individually or as a group (e.g. a film might be accessed individually but a performance is almost always accessed as a group)?

Sharing your work

There's no point creating a Museum of the Intangible if you don't share it with anyone! Reviewing our own project, we wish we'd given more consideration as to who our audiences were for each exhibit, how we would share the exhibits with them (whether that was events, exhibitions, publications etc.), and the need to allocating staff time and money for doing so (e.g. for marketing and social media). Even if you don't know what your exhibits will be when you begin the project, it is important to think about how you will share them with the wider world, how much this will cost, and who will be involved in doing

so (e.g. the museum, the creative practitioners, or both). Practical things to think about include: who is generating any content, whether it needs approving (and if so, by whom), making sure you have the relevant permissions to use images, ensuring everyone has access to the relevant accounts, how it fits into existing marketing schedules etc. And don't forget to allow plenty of time for dissemination and marketing – not just in terms of generating content, but also to meet any copy/marketing deadlines etc.

As social media becomes increasingly important, you need to give particular thought to how you will use it to promote your Museum of the Intangible and its exhibits, and how to ensure a joined-up approach to social media across the various platforms from all participants. This may include agreeing a strategy for who develops content (whether it's the museum, ICH community or creative practitioners – and identifying who within each of those groups will be responsible for it), agreeing specific hashtags to use, deciding whether to use existing channels/accounts or set up new ones, deciding whether one group will take the lead and everyone else shares those posts or if each participant will post independently etc. And remember, while social media is free to use and can have enormous reach, it can also take up a lot of time!

Useful links

Arts Council England: Making Digital Work: Digital Toolkit for Arts and Culture
www.artscouncil.org.uk\publication\making-digital-work-toolkit

Artsy: Social Media Toolkit for Galleries 2017
http://pages.artsy.net/rs/609-FDY-207/images/Social-Media-Toolkit-2017.pdf

Sprout Social: Sprout Social Index 2018
http://downloads.sproutsocial.com/Sprout-Social-Index-2018.pdf

Culture Digital: Cultural Digital email summary 2017
https://mailchi.mp/80e488f1bd54/culturaldigital104?e=c9f1c4957d

Open University: Social Media Toolkit
www.open.ac.uk/community/social-media-toolkit/

When it comes to social media, it is probably best to begin with each platform's own introduction and then look to see what others have done:

Twitter
https://help.twitter.com/en/twitter-guide

Tweetdeck
https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-use-tweetdeck

Facebook
www.facebook.com/business/overview

Instagram
https://help.instagram.com/454502981253053

GIF animation
https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4WhwA1BsZgMWFpRU2pXM2ZqYTA

Livestreaming
https://blog.nms.ac.uk/2016/11/21/museum-experiments-with-facebook-live-video/

360-degree photography
https://medium.com/merl-rm-blogtest/putting-our-museum-on-google-streetview-265e464218e3

Sustainability of your project

As with any project, you need to think about the legacy and sustainability of your Museum of the Intangible. What will happen to the exhibits when the project finishes? Will they have a life/be accessible beyond the end of the project, either physically or digitally? And if so, who will be responsible for them and how will they be maintained?

You may find that the experience is something you want to build on and develop, or you may decide that the Museum of the Intangible approach is not for you. In any case, you should think about the resource implications in terms of time, cost, space etc. for all participants of both short-term and longer-term engagements with ICH and communities, and whether you will seek to maintain any of the relationships you have developed after the end project, and how you will go about doing that.

Evaluating your project

Don't forget to think about how you will evaluate your Museum of the Intangible to help you determine if you have achieved your aims, objectives and outcomes, and to help you understand what worked and what didn't and why. Evaluation doesn't need to be overly expensive or time-consuming, but it does need to be well thought through and considered in the planning stages of the project.

Useful links

East of England Museum Hub: Evaluation Toolkit for Museum Practitioners
http://visitors.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ShareSE_Evaltoolkit.pdf [NB. Data Protection guidance in section 9.1 is out of date as of 25 May 2018 and GDPR]

Essex Museums: Evaluation Planning Toolkit
https://essexmdo.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/evaluation-planning-toolkit.pdf

SECTION 6:
FURTHER READING

UNESCO
ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003

In 2003, UNESCO produced the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The website provides the full text of the Convention, information about ICH and safeguarding, lists of ICH around the world, and many other resources relating to ICH.

Museums Galleries Scotland
museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/projects/intangible-cultural-heritage

Museums Galleries Scotland has been working in the area of ICH since 2007. They support museums to work with ICH, help identify opportunities for development and collaboration, and oversee the 'ICH in Scotland' website (ichscotland.org).

International Journal of Intangible Heritage
ijih.org

The International Journal of Intangible Heritage is a refereed academic and professional journal, published annually and dedicated to the promotion of the understanding of all aspects of intangible heritage worldwide, and to the communication of research and examples of good professional practice.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project
ichandmuseums.eu/en

The Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project (IMP) is a four-year European project (2017–2020) which explores the variety of approaches, interactions and practices relating to ICH in museums in Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy and France. The project emphasises the role museums can play in safeguarding ICH and how ICH can become an integral part of museum practice and policies.

ICOMOS-UK
icomos-uk.org/blog/post/exploring-intangible-cultural-heritage-report

In 2017–18, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites UK ran a pilot project, 'Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Contexts'. The project report is available on request from ICOMOS-UK.

a-n The Artists Information Company
a-n.co.uk

a-n is the largest artists' membership organisation in the UK, supporting artists and those who work with them. They provide a variety of free resources, including guidance on contracts, fees and day rates, and working with artists and galleries.

Paying Artists
payingartists.org.uk/resources

Paying Artists is an initiative which builds relationships between artists and galleries. They provide a range of free resources on such topics as proposals, contracts, budgets, negotiation, and pay guidelines.

Artists Union England
www.artistsunionengland.org.uk

Artists' Union England is an independent trade union for professional visual and applied artists. They provide guidance on rates of pay for artists.

Scottish Artists Union
sau.org.uk

The Scottish Artists Union (SAU) is a trade union for visual and applied artists in Scotland. They provide guidance on rates of pay and contracts for visual and applied artists in Scotland.

Design and Artists' Copyright Society (DACS):
dacs.org.uk

DACS is a not-for-profit visual artists' rights management organisation. They collect and distribute royalties to visual artists and their estates through Payback, Artist's Resale Right, Copyright Licensing and Artimage, and provide guidance, advice and factsheets on copyright, moral rights and other rights.

Northern Ireland Museums Council
nimc.co.uk/what-we-do/guidance-and-information/museum-and-creative-industries-toolkit

The Northern Ireland Museums Council has developed a series of 'how-to' guidance sheets – the Museums and Creative Industries Toolkit – to help museums and creative businesses work together successfully. The guidance covers everything from developing ideas, through to finding partners and building relationships, and to overcoming practical and contractual hurdles.

MAKE YOUR OWN MUSEUM OF THE INTANGIBLE: A TOOLKIT

ℹ️ For more information, please contact:

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merl.reading.ac.uk/museum-of-the-intangible

merl.reading.ac.uk
blogs.reading.ac.uk/merl/