

Digitizing the Donor Experience: Exploring the Use of Digital Collections to Engage Donors in the Museum Sector



Romilly Beard

Fellow in Museum Practice
March-September 2019



Smithsonian
Center for Learning and Digital Access

Contents

- Digitizing the Donor Experience:** 1
- Executive Summary 3
- Introduction 4
- Donor Behavior: Living in a Digital World 5
- Understanding the Current Landscape: Digital Fundraising 9
- Understanding the Current Landscape: Digitization..... 14
- Comparing the Culture of Giving in the US and UK 20
- Examples: Using Digitized Objects to Engage Donors 24
 - Smithsonian Learning Lab: Personalized Collections 24
 - Neil Armstrong’s Space Suit 26
 - The Ruby Slippers..... 27
 - The Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum..... 28
 - The George Washington University Textile Museum 29
 - The Gift Project 29
- Conclusions 31
- Fellowship Outputs: Sharing the Learning 32
- Acknowledgements..... 33
- Bibliography 35

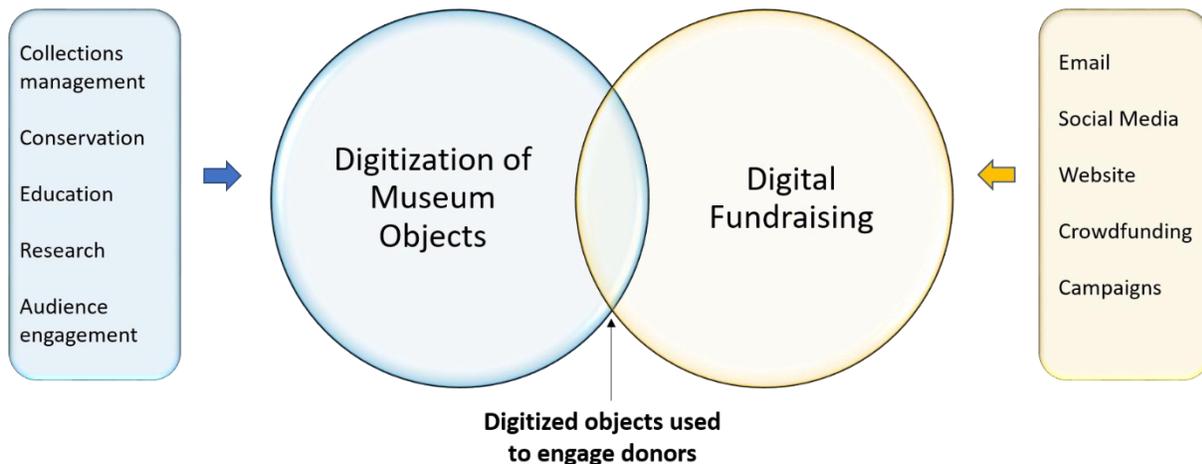
Executive Summary

There is increasing evidence that donor behavior is starting to shift towards greater use of online donations through crowdfunding and digital platforms. With younger philanthropists now fluent in digital communication, this channel of engagement will need to be utilized more frequently and effectively by the museum sector in the future. In the fundraising space, digital fundraising is now being used extensively as an effective method to engage donors. Meanwhile many in the museum sector focus on digitizing objects for the purposes of collection management, preservation and access for research. This paper examines the role of digitized collections through a fundraising lens. It explores how digitized objects can be used to personalize a donor experience and engage donors. A collection of examples where digitized objects have been used in fundraising campaigns is presented. This includes examples from the Smithsonian Institution and other organizations. This research is being shared with museums who took part in the Inspiring a Culture of Philanthropy (ICP) program¹ in the UK in 2014-2018. As such, part of the paper explores the culture of giving in the US and the UK. While there are cultural and historical differences, there is much that can be learnt from each country in terms of fundraising. This research interest originated from my work leading the ICP program. I was keen to explore ways in which museums with limited capacity to fundraise could draw on techniques which had high impact while making use of digital collections they may have already produced. The paper shows that while using digitized objects within fundraising can be a straightforward enhancement to a fundraising campaign, implementing this requires organizational engagement, consideration of specific donor preferences, and the appropriate digital infrastructure to support it.

¹ The Inspiring a Culture of Philanthropy Programme ran from 2014 to 2018 with 27 museums in the South of England. The project helped museums develop their fundraising capacity through a structured training, mentoring and peer learning program. It also engaged with potential donors to raise the profile of the museum sector as potential donor recipients. It was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Introduction

The focus of this research is to examine how digitized objects can be used to engage museum donors. I interpret this as the intersection of museum digitization and digital fundraising, as shown in the diagram below. Digitized objects are defined as museum artifacts which have been converted into a digital format through mediums which include photographs, scanned documents, 3D images or scans, video and audio files.



Currently there is very little evidence compiled on the use of digitized objects for fundraising. It should be another digital fundraising tool for advancement teams. It could be a very simple progression for museums to use digitized objects in this way and thereby make use of their collections in more ways. This simple change could have a big impact.

Museum fundraisers have a wealth of powerful visual images at their disposal which can be used to tell their museum's story. Digitization professionals and curators also need to be aware of this opportunity and make sure there is useful metadata accompanying objects or consider specific objects which they think could be useful to their fundraising team.

The objectives of this research are:

1. Highlight the use of digitized objects in donor engagement;
2. Understand the current landscape of: (a) donor behavior, (b) digital fundraising, and (c) museum digitization, and through this provide evidence and data;
3. Compare the US and UK cultures of giving;
4. Share examples of the use of digitized objects to engage donors; and
5. Start a conversation within museums, across disciplines and the wider sector.

To clarify, this research does not look at how digitized objects can be used for commercial economic gain. It also does not focus on fundraising for digitization projects. The research examines the areas of museum digitization and digital fundraising in as far as they overlap and relate to the research topic.

The Smithsonian Institution is the largest museum and research complex in the world. It houses over 155 million objects and specimens, has 164,000 cubic feet of archival material and 1.8 million volumes of library material. 13 million of these have been digitized and are available to view online. It also has a significant online presence with 15 million followers on social media platforms and 160 million unique visits to its website in 2018.² It therefore has a wealth of experience and information to draw on in relation to this topic and as host of the Fellowship in Museum Practice.

Donor Behavior: Living in a Digital World

Internet use continues to rise in the UK and the US. In 2017 94.62% of individuals used the internet in the UK while 87.27% used it in the US. This has risen from 75% in both countries a decade earlier.³ A recent report showed Britons spend 24 hours a week

² Smithsonian Institution "Facts about the Smithsonian Institution: Media Fact Sheet" (February 14, 2019) Accessed on July 26, 2019. <https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/factsheets/facts-about-smithsonian-institution-short>

³ International Telecommunications Union "Country ICT Data, Individuals_Internet_2000-2018_June2019" Accessed August 29, 2019. www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stats/default.aspx

online on average, making digital “the new ordinary”.⁴ In 2017 there was a 6.4% increase in giving to Arts, Culture and Humanities in the US, at \$19.51bn with 5% of all giving going to these sectors.⁵ However in 2018 growth stayed relatively flat and fell 2.1% (adjusted for inflation).⁶ Comparing against previous years though both are record years for giving. In some ways 2017 can be seen as a ‘bumper year’ for giving in the USA. Charitable giving surpassed \$400bn for the first time.⁷ Online giving grew by 1.2% from 2017 to 2018. Blackbaud reported that Arts and Cultural organizations had the largest growth in overall (5.5%) and online (9.5%) giving in 2018.⁸ The year before in 2017 arts organizations in the US showed that online giving was growing in the sector with a 17.2% increase in online charitable revenue. The figures from these years should be read with an advisory as, in the US, changes in the tax code together with political and economic changes made 2017 an unusual year.

The term ‘new philanthropy’ is increasingly used to define the emerging group of philanthropists who have significant funds to give, are looking at new models of giving and support greater democratization of philanthropy.⁹ This last point is key as many donors in this category want to have a greater say and participate directly. They seek deeper relationships with the recipient organization¹⁰. A study in 2013 of so-called ‘next gen donors’ showed that they are far more focused on addressing particular problems rather than funding organizations. They want to be much more hands-on in tackling the problem and fully understand the challenges involved. They are also far more strategic

⁴ HM Government “Culture is Digital: June 2019 progress report” (June 24, 2019) Accessed on June 28, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital-june-2019-progress-report>

⁵ Giving USA, *Giving USA 2018: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2017* (Indiana: IUPUI), 307.

⁶ Giving USA, *Giving USA 2019: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2018* (2019) Accessed on September 11, 2019. <https://givingusa.org/giving-usa-2019-americans-gave-427-71-billion-to-charity-in-2018-amid-complex-year-for-charitable-giving/>

⁷ Giving USA, *Giving USA 2018*, 17.

⁸ Blackbaud Institute for Philanthropic Impact *Charitable Giving Report: How Fundraising Performed in 2018* (February 2019) Accessed on May 11, 2019. <https://institute.blackbaud.com/asset/2018-charitable-giving-report/>, 5.

⁹ Nina Kressner Cobb ‘The New Philanthropy: Its Impact on Funding Arts and Culture’ *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* (2002, 32:2), 125.

¹⁰ Jennifer Radbourne and Kenneth Watkins, *Philanthropy and the Arts* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), 32.

in what they fund with a focus on outcomes.¹¹ Radbourne and Watkins (2015) carried out an analysis of donors of the Australian National Ballet. They observed that “new donors are sophisticated in their thinking and seek a closer engagement with the organization, much like an investor”.¹² The CultureTrack 2017 report concluded that “The future of cultural philanthropy will be interest-tailored and impact-driven, with greater emphasis on social return on investment”.¹³ The sector must therefore be more focused on the donor experience throughout the relationship. There is a similar trend in the UK with Tonya Nelson, Director of Arts Technology and Innovation at Arts Council England explaining “Audience studies show that digitally native millennials and future generations will expect experiences that are personalized and interactive”.¹⁴ Online giving has democratized donor engagement so even small organizations can engage directly with donors and donors can develop closer relationships with the causes they hold dear.¹⁵

Looking at the higher end of the donor spectrum, there was growth in the ultra-high net-worth 400 wealthiest from \$2.4 trillion in 2016 to \$2.7 trillion in 2017. Philanthropists from the tech industry make the largest contributions and this growth is driven by younger philanthropists who are likely to continue to give.¹⁶ Klasky (2019) states that “we are in the middle of the largest wealth transfer that has ever taken place. Some \$30 trillion is expected to be passed on from baby boomers over the next few decades in the United States alone”.¹⁷ This younger generation of ‘mega donors’ are “digital natives who are mobile and connected”.¹⁸ Online fundraising will play a much more central role

¹¹ Michael Moody and Sharna Goldseker *Next Gen Donors: Respecting Legacy, Revolutionizing Philanthropy* (Johnson Center for Philanthropy and 21/64, July 2013), 4-5.

¹² Radbourne and Watkins, *Philanthropy and the Arts*, xiv.

¹³ La Placa Cohen Advertising Inc *CultureTrack 2017* (2018) Accessed April 30, 2019. <https://s28475.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CT2017-Topline-Deck-1.pdf> 115.

¹⁴ Museums and Heritage “Innovation in Museums: how the Arts Council is spurring digital transformation” (March 5, 2019) Accessed on May 21, 2019 <https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/innovation-museums-arts-council-spurring-digital-transformation>

¹⁵ Giving USA, *Giving USA 2018*, 308.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁷ Ben Klasky ‘How Technology Will Soon Change the Way Americans Give’ *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (Opinion, March 5, 2019) Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/How-Technology-Will-Soon/245793>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

in the future including how donors identify the causes they support and the engagement they seek. The huge wealth transfer that will take place to this generation means that their approach cannot be ignored, and museums will need to consider how they tell a story focused on a particular challenge, issue or community to appeal to donors.

There is growing appeal amongst cultural consumers for digital experiences that increase their access to more detailed information and give a deeper understanding as well as activities which are shareable digitally.¹⁹ This evidence would suggest that audiences - and therefore potential donors - would be attracted to greater digital engagement from a fundraising campaign. The use of digital objects which can be shared or provide greater depth of information about a collection through visual images would help to deepen the cultural experience. In fact, the CultureTrack 2017 report found that 86% of respondents wanted to have digital experiences in science, technology or natural history museums – the highest response for any type of cultural activity. Art or Design Museums were the second preference with 81% of respondents.²⁰ A clear indication that visitors to museums are interested in engaging digitally. They also want to have fun (81% of respondents) when they engage with cultural activities.²¹

A growth in new ways of engaging with donors was seen in 2017 as more gave through crowdfunding as well as artists engaging directly with patrons through using technology.²² The UK Giving survey shows that in 2018 19% of its respondents gave to charity online. The highest proportion (58%) gave through the third party app JustGiving then 46% gave via the charity's website and 14% gave through social media such as Facebook.²³ Younger audiences also prefer 'digital-first' social networks with US teens using the social networks Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram most often.²⁴ Giving

¹⁹ La Placa Cohen Advertising Inc *CultureTrack 2017*, 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² Giving USA, *Giving USA 2018*, p.320.

²³ Charities Aid Foundation *CAF UK Giving 2019: An overview of charitable giving in the UK* (May 2019) Accessed May 20, 2019. https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf-uk-giving-2019-report-an-overview-of-charitable-giving-in-the-uk.pdf?sfvrsn=c4a29a40_4_16.

²⁴ MDG Advertising "It's All About the Images: Infographic" (October 1, 2018) Accessed September 5, 2019 www.mdgadvertising.com/marketing-insights/infographics/its-all-about-the-images-infographic/

Tuesday marks the start of the charitable giving season at the end of November in the week after Thanksgiving. It has grown rapidly in the last five years and research indicates that the majority of Americans now prefer to give online during this campaign.²⁵ Mairi Maclean makes the point that social media platforms allow users to curate their online identities. Donors can easily demonstrate to their followers that they give and links them to particular causes which they want to be associated with their online identity.²⁶

Understanding the Current Landscape: Digital Fundraising

There are a range of forms which digital fundraising is currently taking. Live streaming is increasingly popular including using it to engage donors with behind the scenes views and through telethon style formats. Crowdfunding continues to be popular with organizations and donors. The use of digital assistants, such as Amazon's Alexa, to give via voice remote is also growing in popularity in the US and the UK. Digital, in all its forms, has the potential to drastically increase fundraising results.²⁷ The lack of funds or knowledge to do this can hold back many non-profits. Digital platforms should be used where it makes sense for that organization with a focus on doing a few things well rather than trying to use every new technology tool. Warwick (2001) argues, tailoring a fundraising strategy to the donor with a mix of approaches (direct mail, online, face to face) with a consistent message across these multiple channels is key to successful fundraising.²⁸ Digital should complement other forms of engagement and should not be done for the sake of it or at the expense of other forms.²⁹

²⁵ Women's Philanthropy Initiative *Gender Differences in Giving Tuesday Participation* (Indianapolis: Lily Family School of Philanthropy, December 2017), 6.

²⁶ Mairi Maclean 'Identity, Storytelling And The Philanthropic Journey' *Human Relations* (68:10, 2015), 23.

²⁷ Barbara O'Reilly 'Introduction' in Barbara O'Reilly ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3* (Rogare, v1.1 April 2019), 9.

²⁸ Mal Warwick 'The Emerging Gold Standard of Integrated Fundraising' in Daryl E. Ferguson, Mal Warwick, Mim Carlson, Ted Hart, Nick Allen ed. *Fundraising on the Internet: The ePhilanthropy-Foundation.Org's Guide to Success Online* (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 23.

²⁹ Interview with Anna Karvellas, Philanthropy Initiative Program Manager, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution (May 21, 2019) and same remark from Interview with Jaap Otte, Director of Development and Adam Metallo, Senior 3D Program Officer, Research and Education Impact, Office of Chief Information Officer, Smithsonian Institution (June 6, 2019).

In 2018 fundraising through email appeals and response rates to emails fell, although email messaging drove 13% of all online revenue. M+R in their Benchmark Survey said that it showed fundraisers are facing challenges in how to engage donors through traditional email channels.³⁰ In the same year there was a sharp increase in digital advertising spending. An additional 23% went on lead generation and advocacy which includes activities like quizzes, completing a survey, signing a petition.³¹ Using digital objects in campaigns to encourage audiences to share them, create their own collections, vote on their favorites, create a calendar or bookmark are all ways to encourage potential donors to engage with your museum, cause and brand. The data shows that others in the non-profit sector are already doing this. Museums should make use of the assets they have and their unique selling points through their digitized objects.

Peer to peer fundraising is not a new concept but its use online is growing and making it a powerful tool for fundraising. This is evidenced by the rising prominence of social influencers on YouTube and other social media platforms.³² The use of digital collections personalized by an organization or a potential donor and then shared with others in their network can help to spread the message from a particular museum and specifically a story related to a fundraising campaign.

Social media is generally used to build relationships with potential visitors rather than with potential donors. They should be seen though as one in the same thing as any online engagement could be with a potential donor. Social media enables museums to personalize this engagement, which traditionally might have been reserved for high net worth donors, allows museums to learn more about donors as individuals and their particular interests.³³ Facebook's giving platform has grown in the last year to take a

³⁰ Will Valverde *Benchmarks 2019* (2019) Accessed June 10, 2019 www.mrbenchmarks.com , 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³² Katrina McLeod *New Theatre Fundraising Strategies* (Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 2018) Accessed on May 12, 2019. <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/McLeod%20K%202018%20Final.pdf> , 12.

³³ Dixie Clough *People follow People: The key to a successful YouTube Strategy for Museums* (November 2011), 19.

greater share of online giving. The convenience of the platform for many that prefer to engage online has been popular with donors. Although access to donor data for use by fundraisers in follow-up can be more limited.

Using social media to engage potential donors and audiences is greatly enhanced by the use of memorable images. Digital collections offer an extensive range of options. The Museum of English Rural Life in Reading, England did just this in a tweet in April 2018. It went viral and led to the museum increasing its Twitter followers from 9,679 in April 2018 to over 100,000 in under a year. The museum understood that social media was a tool that the whole museum should use whilst being led by one member of staff with a distinctive voice for the account. The museum has embraced digital marketing and recognizes that it needs to constantly experiment with social media and trust staff within this context.³⁴

Data on donors is also key for non-profits as donors will expect more tailored interaction and therefore non-profits need to understand their donors to build relationships.³⁵ In the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came in to force in 2018 and aims to protect the data of all EU citizens it also includes the transfer of personal data outside of the EU. In practice it has required organizations, including the not-for-profit sector, to ensure everyone that it holds data on is aware of this and allow them to opt-in to be included in databases. Whilst there was surrounding changes in the UK charitable sector at the same time, GDPR has made the sector rethink how it can tailor donor experiences or carry out direct (e)mail campaigns to a reduced group.

Sargeant and Jay (2014) emphasize the need for organizations to differentiate their donors online by showing different content depending on their interests or propensity to give: "The most effective websites engage the potential donor in a dialogue and add

³⁴ HM Government "Culture is Digital: June 2019 progress report"

³⁵ Barbara O'Reilly ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3* (Rogare, v1.1 April 2019), 9.

value by being seen to interact with the user.”³⁶ Using digitized objects to engage potential donors includes many of the characteristics of relationship marketing. It can add visual support to the storytelling in a case for support. It enables greater interaction and customization through selecting digitized objects that are relevant to a donor or a specific campaign.³⁷ With useful metadata and descriptions, the digitized object can also help to give the potential donor a greater understanding of the need. The Smithsonian Learning Lab (SLL) provides the structure to be able to create customized collections for use in specific campaigns. As is shown in the examples section, it provides a platform to create custom collections which can then be sent to donors, potential donors and audiences. Once a donor has given, digitized objects can also be used to help retain donors, not just to acquire new ones. They can accompany a thank you message, or a new custom curated collection could be sent to the donor as a way of continuing a discussion with them, for example ‘I saw this and thought of you’.

Moving from digital skills, which are largely technical driven, to being digitally literate involves wider skills around co-creation, sharing and storytelling.³⁸ In many of the interviews I conducted with fundraisers they emphasized the importance of consistent storytelling and a consistent experience across all platforms (in-person visits, social media, emails).³⁹ Having the skills to tell stories and make use of the media available to do this is vital across all museum professions to support fundraising and wider audience engagement. It is estimated that 70% of everything we learn is through stories. The Resource Alliance argues that “seeking out stories and telling them in a way that inspires both you and your donor, is the essence of being a fundraiser”.⁴⁰ Alongside this

³⁶ Adrian Sargeant and Elaine Jay *Fundraising Management: Analysis, planning and practice* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 315.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 316.

³⁸ Sally-Anne Barnes, Erika Kispeter, Doris Ruth Eikhof and Ross Parry *One by One Building Digitally Confident Museums: Mapping the Museum Digital Skills Ecosystem: Phase One Report* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2018) Accessed on June 24, 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital-june-2019-progress-report>, 20.

³⁹ Interview with Matthew Lindsay, Executive Director, Marketing Communications Development and Alumni Relations, The George Washington University (June 18, 2019) is an example of this.

⁴⁰ The Resource Alliance “Storytelling: The Most Powerful Way to Get Your Fundraising Message Across – The Resource Alliance” Accessed May 15, 2019. <https://resource-alliance.org/storytelling-the-most-powerful-way-to-get-your-fundraising-message-across-2>

the role that digitization can play to personalize an experience appears to be the direction of travel for museum digitization.⁴¹

Visual images can create very strong emotional connections. Images can enhance what is being said either verbally or in writing. Images engage parts of the brain connected to creativity and imagination. Psychologists have shown that the brain retains information if it is associated with a visual image compared to text alone. People remember only 10% of information three days after hearing it but adding a picture can improve recall to 65%.⁴² Suler (2012) conducted a study which demonstrated that the unconscious mind retains images that have significance to that individual, regardless of the number of images they have seen. Images are stored in the long-term memory while words are processed in the short-term memory.⁴³ In the digital age where images are now commonplace, finding the images (from digitized objects) which resonate most with a potential donor is important. This is shown in the examples section with the case of George Washington University Textile Museum. Digital content comes from a range of sources and research from the media shows that articles with images get 94% more views compared to articles without.⁴⁴ Finding unique or unusual digital objects to include in communications with donors will help a museum stand out from other causes vying for attention online.

Figures from the UK show that overall charitable giving was down 4.2% in 2018 while online giving increased 5.5%. This is compared to a 1.5% overall increase in giving in the US and 1.2% increase in online giving in 2018.⁴⁵ Online giving is “entering a new phase where mobile and other digital channels continue to change how donors engage with nonprofit organizations”. Although this is still not a large amount that is given online, the figure does not show the whole picture as donors are also giving online

⁴¹ Barnes, Kispeter, Eikhof and Parry *One by One*, 21.

⁴² MDG Advertising “It’s All About the Images”

⁴³ John Suler “The Psychological Impact of Image Streams Photographic Psychology: Image and Psyche” Accessed September 5, 2019. https://users.rider.edu/~sulerphotopsy/impact_stream.htm

⁴⁴ MDG Advertising “It’s All About the Images”

⁴⁵ Blackbaud Institute for Philanthropic Impact “Charitable Giving Report: How Fundraising Performed in 2018” ,14.

through platforms such as Facebook, crowdfunding and JustGiving. Organizations will then get a payment transfer rather than this showing as online giving. E-commerce represented 10% of all retail sales in the US in 2015.⁴⁶ Donors will therefore also expect to be able to access multiple channel to give as they can to shop.⁴⁷

Understanding the Current Landscape: Digitization

The Smithsonian Strategic Plan 2017-22 includes a goal to “reach 1 billion people a year with a digital first strategy”. This includes creating a “digital laboratory to test and develop emerging museum related digital technologies” and also create “new digital platforms for scholars and educators to better access Smithsonian collections, research and education resources”.⁴⁸ It is developing a digital strategy which is audience centric. Initially this is focused on particular groups so that detailed workshops can be held with representatives of these groups to ensure digital content and wider strategy meets their user needs. Multiple channels will be used to engage and there is a strong emphasis on consistent messaging. This is a large undertaking with a 5-year goal of 2024 to have the digital strategy implemented across the target groups. Trialing different approaches and activities – such as crowdsourcing transcribing with middle schools and curators adding new digital content with audiences in mind – will help the organization assess which approaches have most impact with different groups before any roll-out across other parts of the Smithsonian.⁴⁹

The UK Culture White Paper set out that it wants the UK to become one of the world’s leading countries for digitized public collections.⁵⁰ The majority (73%) of the UK

⁴⁶ J Smith ‘Mobile eCommerce stats in 2018 and the future trends of eCommerce’ (2018) cited in T. Clay Buck ‘How data, technology and social media are affecting fundraising’ in Barbara O’Reilly ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3* (Rogare, v1.1 April 2019), 45.

⁴⁷ T. Clay Buck ‘How data, technology and social media are affecting fundraising’ in Barbara O’Reilly ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3* (Rogare, v1.1 April 2019), 44.

⁴⁸ Smithsonian Institution *Smithsonian Strategic Plan 2017-22* (2017) Accessed on April 24, 2019. <https://www.si.edu/sites/default/files/about/smithsonian-2022-strategic-plan.pdf>

⁴⁹ Interview with Effie Kapsalis, Senior Digital Program Officer, Office of the Provost, Smithsonian Institution (May 13, 2019).

⁵⁰ HM Government *The Culture White Paper* (March 2016) Accessed on June 15, 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/51079/8/DCMS_The_Culture_White_Paper_3_.pdf, 9.

museum sector has already digitized more than half of their collections. Half of these have made some of it available online.⁵¹ In the UK a series of action research projects, led by Culture24, have since 2010 compiled evidence around the development of next generation digital cultural activity. There is recognition that the speed of change within digital can be hard to keep pace with. In addition, there is a changing skill set needed by curators and other museum professionals so that digital skills are not siloed. The 'One by One' project is part of this research program and in 2019 developed a workforce development framework to support the sector in a step change to a whole organization approach with collective expertise on digital technology.⁵² The study shows that while there is a significant body of research and activity on the role of curators in digital skills development, this has not been adapted across organizations to address the wider role that each person needs to take in this. Moreover, it is not a skills gap which can be addressed by recruitment alone.⁵³ The increased use of technology in the museum sector gives more ways for museums to engage with visitors and donors.

A systems approach which puts visitors and engagement at the center, rather than operating within compartmentalized departments, will help all museum professionals to appreciate their role in using technology to support the wider goals of the museum.⁵⁴ This moves away from one department doing all digital activity to one where everyone is clear on their role in using technology as part of a strategy to increase engagement. This challenge can be greater in small museums where there may be no digital specific role and several digital roles are combined. This can make it harder to bid for funding for digital when the infrastructure to digitize (workforce, technology, hardware) is not in place and may also require funding.⁵⁵ There is a strong case to put for including digital in funding bids however as it enabled greater audience engagement and preservation.

⁵¹ Arts Council England and Nesta "Digital Culture Survey 2017" cited in HM Government *Culture is Digital: Executive Summary* (March 2018) Accessed on June 28, 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68672/5/Culture_is_Digital_Executive_summary_1_.pdf, 1.

⁵² Barnes, Kispeter, Eikhof and Parry *One by One*, 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁵⁴ Victoria Eudy 'Dr Seuss, Systems, and Digital Strategies: Making Sense of Systems Theory as an Emerging Museum Professional' in Yuha Jung and Anne Rowson Love ed. *Systems Thinking in Museums: Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 33.

⁵⁵ Barnes, Kispeter, Eikhof and Parry *One by One*, 16.

The UK ‘Culture is Digital’ strategy goes on to show that for change to take place trustees and leaders within the sector need to recognize the importance of digital skills and include this in their strategic vision. The current lack of expertise will limit many in their ability to exploit digital content.⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that research on workforce development largely omits the role of fundraisers in digitization.

Where museums studied in the ‘One by One’ project had digitized objects there was a sense of wanting to do more with them. This included linking-up or sharing collections, engaging with schools and researchers. As one respondent said “[digital technology] just opens up to any number of possibilities of how you can extend reach to the collection, make it work harder, because, you know, you don’t want it just sitting there; you want it doing something”.⁵⁷ Using these digitized objects in multiple ways – which includes fundraising – is just such a way to make good use of collections.

If a museum adopts open access to their digitized collections, then the digitized objects can be used by fundraising professionals to create bespoke collections and share these with donors to engage them in using them in more creative ways. From a Smithsonian Institution perspective, it will help to achieve the mission to ‘diffuse knowledge’. The range of funders who make open access a prerequisite is increasing.⁵⁸ Promoting a museum online by sharing digital objects through social media and using them in fundraising campaign is made far easier if digital objects are not subject to copyright regulations.

Case studies in the ‘One by One’ project demonstrated that the ongoing digitization of collections is a major undertaking. The main driver for this in many cases is access to collections either for an online audience or for fragile items to make them more accessible. Digitized objects are also providing new ways to engage audiences. It makes the important point that for these to be effective “digital skills, knowledge and

⁵⁶ HM Government *Culture is Digital*, 9.

⁵⁷ Barnes, Kispeter, Eikhof and Parry *One by One*, 17.

⁵⁸ Interview with Effie Kapsalis, Senior Digital Program Officer, Office of the Provost, Smithsonian Institution (May 13, 2019).

preferences on the part of the audiences also need to be taken into account.”⁵⁹ Despite being a very comprehensive study, in the list of specialist digital roles it does not mention the role of digital in fundraising.⁶⁰ This highlights how the role of digitized objects in fundraising – and indeed the role of fundraising in a museum – is often seen as peripheral to the ‘core’ function of a museum.

There have been concerns in the museum sector that the internet would reduce visitor numbers to museums or threaten the primacy of the physical museum. Thomas (2007) states that an online presence actually shows museums as having a more responsive and active relationship with their audiences. Audiences engage with the museum through a range of methods such as in-person, website and social media. Using these in complementary ways helps the museum to tell a coherent story.⁶¹ There is no substitute for experiencing a museum or historic site. Digital mediums can complement this with access to objects which may not be on display, creating online collections or allowing visitors to view an object in different ways such as through 3D scans.

The Smithsonian has more than 155 million unique artifacts and specimens. Currently around 10 million items have been digitized.⁶² It is estimated that to digitize them all at a rate of one per minute, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year it would take over 300 years! The Digitization Program Office leads on the digitization work for the Institution. Increasingly it has looked to 3D data as a way to give curators and educators deeper understanding and access to objects. The team works to further the Smithsonian’s mission of “the increase and diffusion of knowledge”. They are now looking at how mass digitization can be achieved rather than focusing on specific collections. Alongside the digitization process there is a recognition that the metadata also needs to be present and useful. This can be time intensive and may need to appeal to multiple audiences.

⁵⁹ Barnes, Kispeter, Eikhof and Parry *One by One*, 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶¹ Selma Thomas ‘Introduction’ in Herminia Din and Phyllis Hecht ed. *The Digital Museum: A Think Guide* (American Association of Museums, 2007), 3-4.

⁶² Interview with Jaap Otte, Director of Development and Adam Metallo, Senior 3D Program Officer, Research and Education Impact, Office of Chief Information Officer, Smithsonian Institution (June 6, 2019).

Working collaboratively across the Institution will help this to be successful. There are detailed bodies of work on the role and use of metadata in digitized collections. I will not go into detail in this paper about this topic, only to highlight the importance of useful metadata to accompany digital objects. It is an issue that was raised in many of the interviews and meetings that I had during the course of my Fellowship. Metadata needs to be useful to the range of users that access the object. Collecting the right metadata can be a time-consuming activity and decisions on which items are prioritized for 'user-friendly' metadata should take place across organizations with direction from the leadership.

While the focus of this research is not on the process of digitization, it is interesting to note how the digitization process is funded. The interest amongst donors to fund digitization demonstrates the importance they place on it as a means to further engage or give greater access to a particular object. Without the digitization process of course there would not be digitized objects to use in fundraising. The Smithsonian Libraries has benefitted from philanthropic support to digitize certain parts of their collection. In many instances this is for the purpose of increasing access for research. When manuscripts are donated there is sometimes a stipulation that they will be digitized within a certain timeframe. Museums need to consider if this will be possible before accepting a donation. The prioritization for digitizing objects within Smithsonian Libraries is largely driven by user requests rather than preservation purposes. The aim is to have digitized content open to all, although sometimes there will be restrictions. The Libraries operates an 'Adopt a Book' fundraising appeal. Donors can adopt a particular item in the collection so that it can be preserved. Digitization may be part of this, but it not always possible depending on the donation.⁶³ The British Library runs a similar program with the emphasis on funding conservation. They also try to add a digital element to this so that manuscripts can be more widely available. Cultural heritage is also an important factor in selecting items to digitize.⁶⁴

⁶³ Interview with Martin Kalfatovic, Associate Director Digital Programs and Initiatives, Smithsonian Libraries (May 23, 2019).

⁶⁴ Interview with Michele Burton, Head of Fundraising, The British Library (June 21, 2019) and Kate Birch, Individual Giving and Major Gifts Manager, The British Library (June 26, 2019).

The Smithsonian Learning Lab is not alone, however, as a digital platform through which digitized objects and data can be shared with educators and the wider public. In 2018 a number of grants were issued to museums across the US to develop similar platforms.⁶⁵ These platforms give the museums opportunities to use the digitized objects for fundraising in a similar way that the Smithsonian Institution is able to make use of the Learning Lab. In Europe, Europeana is funded by the European Union to bring digitized cultural heritage collections from across Europe into one place. It contains 57,506,113 artworks, artefacts, books, films and music from European museums, galleries, libraries and archives.⁶⁶ The data is added by over 4000 organizations that work through regional aggregators who compile the data to pass on to Europeana. There are standard description and metadata formats which must be used by all items. Europeana supports organizations to bring in parts of their collection in. In 2018 a crowdsourcing campaign was used to increase their collection on migration. The museums that contribute to Europeana tend to be larger due to the nature of the requirements involved. In some cases, digitized objects have been added directly by Europeana where a museum may not have the infrastructure to host it themselves.⁶⁷

In 2016 the UK Government published the Culture White Paper which set out the government's approach to art and culture⁶⁸ this was followed by the Mendoza Review of museums in England in 2017.⁶⁹ It examined the infrastructure support, challenges and opportunities for the sector and set out a number of recommendations. Alongside this

⁶⁵ Institute of Museums and Library Services have funded projects. Two examples are a \$549,000 grant to Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields to build a shared digital platform and engage with k-12 learners around the country; and \$247,282 grant to Princeton University Art Museum to create multimedia resources for objects to be used by K-12 educators. Accessed in *Foundation Directory Online Professional* (2019) Accessed on April 25, 2019.

⁶⁶ Europeana "Collections" Accessed September 12, 2019. <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en>

⁶⁷ Interview with Adrian Murphy, Collections Manager, Europeana (June 13, 2019).

⁶⁸ HM Government *The Culture White Paper*, 5.

⁶⁹ Neil Mendoza *The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England* (November 2017) Accessed on May 12, 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67393/5/The_Mendoza_Review_an_independent_review_of_museums_in_England.pdf

the digital skills in the sector were being reviewed which led to the publication of 'Culture is Digital' 2018. It recognizes that "Technology offers unprecedented opportunities for the UK cultural sector" including by "increasing access to our world-class archives and collections".⁷⁰ There is a recognition that digital activity is increasing amongst audiences, visitors, donors and professionals in the sector. Part of this sector support includes a Digital Maturity Index and Digital Culture Code will be freely available online in Autumn 2019. They will enable cultural institutions to assess how digital ready they are across a number of areas. Fundraising is not listed within this, but audience engagement will be a central strand. Digitized collections are an important part of this program. Greater access to collections which in turn can lead to new research and the reshaping of 'thematic collections'. Greater audience participation is also an argument for further digitization as audiences create new content and engage with the available content. A Digitization Task Force has been set up led by the National Archives in the UK. Its aim is to take a strategic view of digitization and identify challenges and opportunities and how to overcome them. Online resources⁷¹ have been developed to provide a central online hub of issues to consider before digitizing your collection.⁷² The work set out in the strategy and the support from the taskforce will be vital as research from NESTA and Arts Council England in 2017 showed that over a third of museums in England still feel they do not have the in-house skills to meet their digital aspirations and in some areas digital skills have declined.⁷³

Comparing the Culture of Giving in the US and UK

Politicians in the UK have looked to the culture of giving in the US as something they would like to see emulated in the UK.⁷⁴ While there are lessons that can be learnt from

⁷⁰ HM Government *Culture is Digital: Executive Summary* (March 2018) Accessed on June 28, 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686725/Culture_is_Digital_Executive_summary_1.pdf, 1.

⁷¹ HM Government "What Does Digitizing Collections Involve?" Accessed on June 28, 2019. <https://digitalpathways.weareculture24.org.uk/pathways/what-does-digitising-collections-involve/>

⁷² HM Government "Culture is Digital: June 2019 Progress Report"

⁷³ Barnes, Kispeter, Eikhof and Parry *One by One*, 1.

⁷⁴ Speech by Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (December 8, 2010) Accessed September 19, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/philanthropy-keynote-speech>

the approach to fundraising in the US, there are fundamental differences in the role that the state plays in social policy and taxation as well as the attitude to giving. Through understanding how giving evolved we can see if giving and fundraising approaches can be replicated in the UK. Differences in the areas funded by government such as health and social welfare means there are some causes in the US which donors would not fund in the same way in the UK. As the Charities Aid Foundation concluded in their extensive study on this topic in 2014, the scale of giving in the US and the cultural approach to giving are significant differences which are engrained in the culture of the society and are not easily replicated, nor should they be wholesale.⁷⁵ However the methods of giving and donor preferences around online giving are areas of shared experience while still retaining each country's own approach to giving.

Zunz (2012) argues that philanthropy in the US was in some ways purposefully different from that in Europe as it would be a "capitalist venture in social betterment, not an act of kindness as understood in Christianity".⁷⁶ The first American philanthropists used their business experience to enlarge their wealth and their giving. John D Rockefeller, for example, put much of his new wealth into foundations and created the basis for the current model of Foundation giving. Many of the early philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie and Julius Rosenwald, made their wealth before Federal Income Tax was established and therefore had even more wealth to use in philanthropic giving.⁷⁷ As wages rose in the US so did disposable income which led to the rise of 'mass philanthropy' or 'mass giving'. Donors could see the role their contribution played and mass lower level giving became vital for many organizations. Zunz (2012) observes that "the nation has come to view philanthropy as both a quintessential part of being American and another means to achieving major objectives".⁷⁸ By the 1930s philanthropy had become established as an American value⁷⁹ and withstood the Great

⁷⁵ Rhodri Davis *Give Me a Break: Why the UK should not aspire to a "US-style" culture of charitable giving* (February 2014) Accessed on June 20, 2019. <https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/give-me-a-break--giving-thought-discussion-paper-no-1.pdf>

⁷⁶ Oliver Zunz *Philanthropy in American: a history* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2.

⁷⁷ Waldemar A Nielsen *Inside American Philanthropy: The Dramas of Donorship* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 5.

⁷⁸ Zunz *Philanthropy in American*, 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

Depression. Giving was seen as altruistic and a virtue. At the same time donors could see that they could benefit personally, such as when giving to a cause to eradicate a disease. A culture of giving had been established and mass national campaigns had wide reach as a result. As Brooks Hopkins et al. (1997) assert “Nearly all Americans believe it is their obligation to support charitable causes”.⁸⁰

A noticeable different to the UK was the development of ‘elite philanthropy’ in the US. In the absence of a class system this was a way to show they were part of society and created a sense of identity. Elite donors believed they had an obligation to give; a responsibility which goes with success.⁸¹ Culture and education have long been favorite causes of this elite group and new members followed this pattern to be accepted into the group.⁸² However, the rise of philanthropists who have made their wealth in the tech industry are preferring to fund a wider range of causes, with culture falling down the list. They are reshaping the understanding of elite philanthropists away from a social hierarchical model which could impact the behavior of lower-level donors aspiring to join a select group.

In the UK the case has traditionally had to be made of ‘why charity at all’, whereas in the US the focus can be far more on ‘why this particular charity’.⁸³ This is due to the state having a large role in social welfare, health and education in the UK. The number of causes that donors can choose from means that the UK sector now needs to address both of these questions, while conveying a concise and impactful message.

The line between the role of government and the role of the non-profit sector in social welfare has moved over time. In the UK the state initially determined what were charitable causes to which people were allowed to give. This was largely related to the

⁸⁰ Karen Brooks Hopkins and Carolyn Stopler Friedman *Successful Fundraising for Arts and Cultural Organisations* (Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press, 1997), xv.

⁸¹ Francis Ostrower *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 6-12.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁸³ Rhodri Davis *Give Me a Break: Why the UK should not aspire to a “US-style” culture of charitable giving* (February 2014) <https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/give-me-a-break--giving-thought-discussion-paper-no-1.pdf> (Accessed on June 20, 2019)

Church and changed very little until the industrial revolution led to wealthy individuals, such as Joseph Rowntree, who wanted to address inequalities and give to wider social causes. In the US, there is a strong emphasis on the non-profit sector being free from federal government regulation. During the formation of the nation, the emphasis on low taxation led to a role for the non-profit sector to fund services which were outside of the federally funded arena.⁸⁴ Changes in the tax code in 2018 could be one of the reasons for a decline in giving last year as individuals can no longer itemize giving.⁸⁵ There are likely other factors that influenced this decline including future economic uncertainty, but it shows the impact that taxation has on giving. Changes in giving show that high-net-worth donors have continued to give while the tax changes have impacted mid-level donors giving to a far greater extent.⁸⁶ In the UK the taxation system has incentivized giving from an altruistic perspective, rather than by benefitting the individual donor as has been the case in the US with tax deductions. In the UK the system of Gift Aid enables registered charities to claim an additional 25% on top of donations made by UK tax payers.⁸⁷

Donors will have their own motivations to give this could include altruism, social recognition, tax benefits or a sense of duty to give back. In the US, mass giving and the expectation to give and be asked to give is far stronger than in the UK. The culture of giving is undoubtedly different between the two countries. While there are lessons to learn in terms of the impact of public policy on giving and types of fundraising practices, it is unrealistic to expect the culture of a nation to change.

⁸⁴ Adrian Sargeant and Elaine Jay *Fundraising Management: Analysis, planning and practice* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 4-6.

⁸⁵ Emily Haynes and Michael Theis 'Gifts to Charity Drops 1.7 Percent Last Year, Says 'Giving USA'' *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (June 18, 2019)

⁸⁶ Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy "The Philanthropy Outlook: 2019 and 2020" Accessed May 15, 2019. <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/new-study-predicts-charitable-giving-will-increase-in-each-of-next-two-years-.html?id=287>

⁸⁷ HM Government "Tax relief when you donate to a charity" Accessed on September 11, 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid>

Examples: Using Digitized Objects to Engage Donors

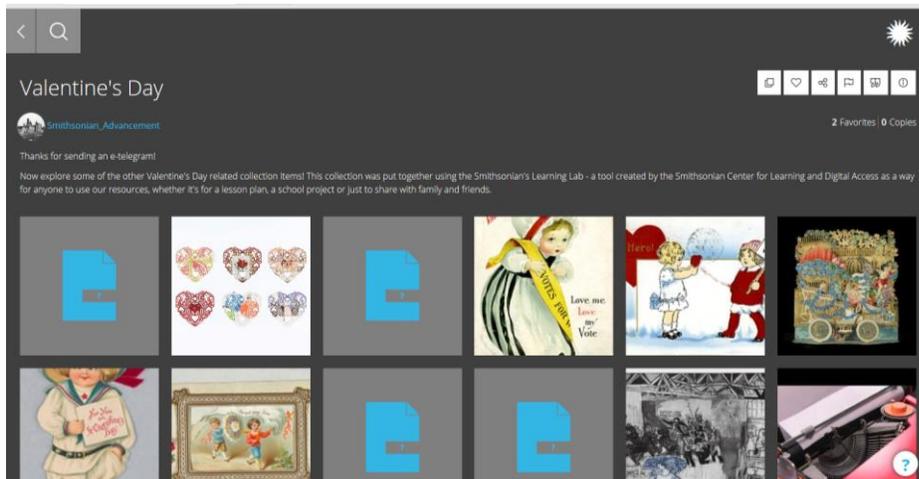
Below are a series of examples where digitized objects have been used, or have the potential to be used, to support fundraising and enhance donor engagement.

Smithsonian Learning Lab: Personalized Collections

The Smithsonian Learning Lab (SLL) is a free to access online platform containing all the digitized objects from the Smithsonian Institution. Objects can be searched by key words and used to create online collections which can be shared or easily embedded into other webpages. It can be used to create collections around a particular theme or even personalized to an individual interest. It can also be used to co-curate by bringing objects together which are in different physical spaces. The SLL is open for use by anyone around the world. The main users are educators in the US and the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access (SCLDA) work with them to use digitized objects and collections to enhance and inspire classroom learning.

The SLL has been used by the Smithsonian Office of Advancement to develop thematic collections which can be used as part of online campaigns. The Online Engagement and Fundraising team have created collections around particular events, such as Valentine's Day, Earth Day, the Superheroes campaign and even on the day of the Super Bowl. The SLL allows them to do this easily and then embed the collection on their campaign, or museum, giving page. The digitized objects that are selected help to increase potential donor's understanding of the Smithsonian and the range of work that takes place. The first digital fundraising campaign that made use of the digitized collections in this way was for Valentine's Day 2017. A Western Union telegram was used which could be pulled out and sent on an e-card. This then took recipients to a donation page and an embed from the Learning Lab of images of other Valentines messages. This raised \$6,000 in one day and 60% of these were first time donors.

Interestingly over 50% of potential donors on the email campaign surveyed had never visited the Smithsonian.⁸⁸ The SLL is increasingly being used by other parts of the Smithsonian Institution, such as Smithsonian Archives, to create bespoke collections relevant to a particular group or individual. It makes it possible to bring together collections that are not accessible to the public or in physically different spaces. Collections can also be easily embedded onto other sites.



Source: Smithsonian Learning Lab: <https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/valentines-day/Yst5JJVpE2EGzJKD#r> (Accessed on September 9, 2019)

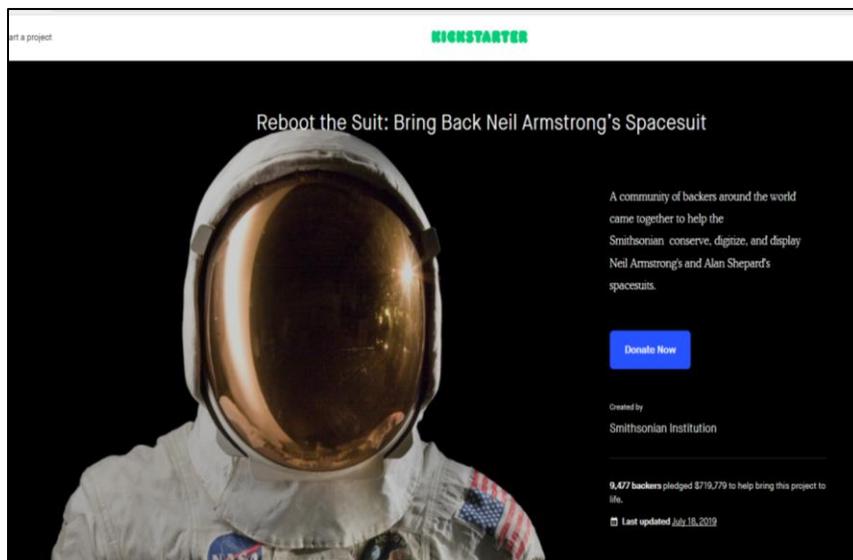
On the email list that is used for Digital fundraising 30% have never visited the Smithsonian Institution and of these, 30% never plan to visit. Digital can help to bridge this gap. The digitized collections help to create a link for potential donors to the Smithsonian Institution. From there the message of 'there is so much more beyond this item' can be used to entice donors to give. The message that needs to be central is 'here is the collection or activity and you as a donor can make so much more of it by giving'. Any examples where there is an opportunity for playing and engaging or making it more relevant to the donor, the more successful the campaign. E-cards, quizzes and votes have all been used for this. Where users have control, could go deeper into an

⁸⁸ Emily Esten, SCLDA Education and Evaluation Intern *Documenting the Use of the Smithsonian Learning Lab Among Smithsonian Museums, Research Centers and Other Programmatic Offices* (August 2017) Accessed April 24, 2019. https://learninglab.si.edu/cabinet/file/edc7e1f0-fc84-40eb-8cd2-cdf51ad7958a/Smithsonian-SCLDA_InternalLearningLabUsage_Report.pdf , 28.

area of interest or feel a stronger connection always result in a greater return. For example, email recipients were invited to make a scrapbook during the calendar year end campaign in 2018. Figures showed that users were 14 times more likely to give if they made a scrapbook than if they didn't.⁸⁹

Neil Armstrong's Space Suit

The Smithsonian has used Kickstarter campaigns successfully to fundraise for preservation and 3D digitization work. The first was in 2015 with 'Reboot the Suit: Bring Back Neil Armstrong's Space Suit'⁹⁰ to raise funds to carry out conservation work on Neil Armstrong's space suit and also create a 3D image of the suit. The goal was \$500,000 which was achieved in 5 days with 9000 supporters. They have currently raised \$719,000. As the total has increased they are able to expand their work and are now planning to digitize Alan Shepard's space suit which will go into a new exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum. The 3D scan gives worldwide access to inside the suit and is all open access.



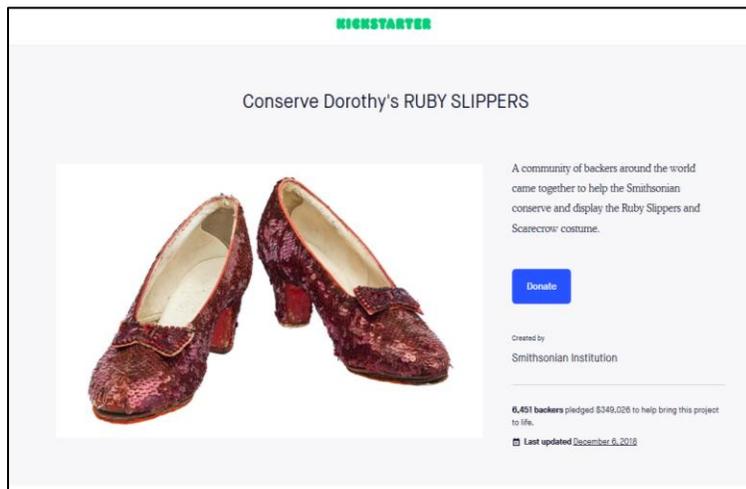
⁸⁹ Interview with Lara Koch, Director, Online Engagement and Fundraising, Office of Advancement, Smithsonian Institution (April 23, 2019)

⁹⁰ Kickstarter "Reboot the Suit" Accessed June 15, 2019.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/smithsonian/reboot-the-suit-bring-back-neil-armstrongs-spacesu>

The Ruby Slippers

'Keep it Ruby: Conserve Dorothy's Ruby Slippers' was a Smithsonian Kickstarter campaign in 2016 aimed to raise \$300,000 to restore the ruby slippers worn in the film *The Wizard of Oz*.⁹¹ The campaign gave donors an opportunity to 'see behind the curtain' into the world of conservation through a series of videos produced and posted online. The conservation processes were explained so that donors could appreciate the level of giving required. Campaigns of this nature require departments to work collaboratively which can be very time consuming. The cost-benefit trade-off should be calculated centrally, and a decision made on this. The Ruby Slippers campaign while being time-intensive and a more costly campaign relative to others (38c spent/\$1 raised compared to an average of 35c/\$1) had the benefit of making parts of the Institution work together to deliver a high-profile campaign which generated media interest and potentially increased visitors to the exhibit and museum as a result.

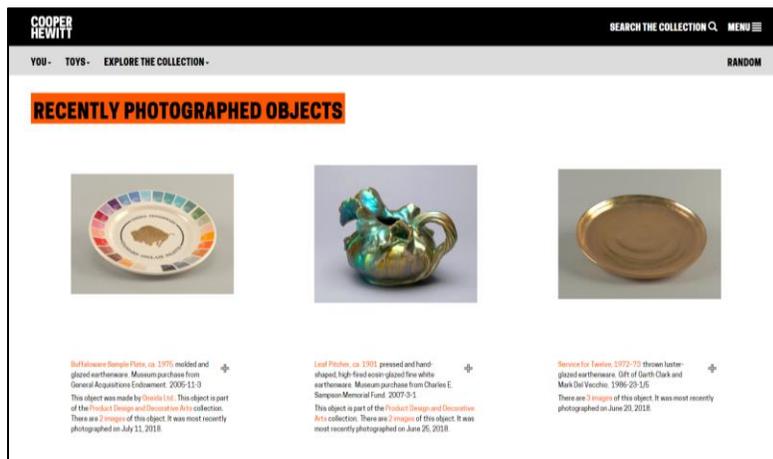


These are of course both iconic images particularly to American donors. The power of images to evoke emotions and memories can be a powerful driver to give, especially when accompanied by compelling narratives on the reason to give to collectively preserve a national treasure.

⁹¹ Kickstarter "Conserve Dorothy's Ruby Slippers" Accessed on June 15, 2019. <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/smithsonian/conserve-dorothys-ruby-slippers>

The Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum

One example of a museum which has digital at the heart of the visitor experience is the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York. Following a significant refurbishment of the museum building, which included closing the museum for a time, the whole 200,000 item collection was digitized. A wide range of technology was used to do this and one donor funded the whole process. The images and metadata are now permanently available online for users and visitors to create their own collections.⁹² The website includes a ‘people browser’ which allows visitors to explore the collection and the individuals responsible for the collection including the artist, designer or donor. They also wanted the physical experience in the museum to be enhanced by digital. Venture philanthropy was needed for investment in new technologies which were a high-risk area⁹³. The Pen was developed as a tool which visitors are given on arrival at the museum. They can use it to create their own personal collection or journey around the museum by connecting it to various digital panels to select images and draw. This journey can then be downloaded at home⁹⁴. It could be shared with others or kept by the visitor. This is both a useful tool for encouraging repeat visits but also to engage potential donors after a visit to the museum.



⁹² Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum “Collections” Accessed on June 15, 2019. <https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/>

⁹³ Sebastian Chan and Aaron Cope, ‘Strategies against Architecture: Interactive Media and Transformative Technology at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum’, *Curator: The Museum Journal*, Vol 58, Issue 3 (July 2015): 352-368.

⁹⁴ Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum “Using The Pen” Accessed on June 15, 2019. <https://www.cooperhewitt.org/events/current-exhibitions/using-the-pen/>

The George Washington University Textile Museum

The museum is over 100 years old and has a well-regarded, extensive textile collection. Currently less than 5% of the collection is digitized, although a grant this year will enable more than 30% of the collection to be digitized. A publicly accessible database will be produced as part of the grant. The portal will then be used to help raise funds to digitize the rest of the collection. Online access to the collection is important to the museum donors as 40% of visitors come from outside of the local area and therefore can find it hard to visit in person. Although the digital collection is currently not large, the museum has still been able to make use of its digital objects to engage potential donors. In 2013 the museum sent contacts three high resolution downloadable images which could be used as wallpaper on laptops and smartphones. The download rate was very high and the aim was that this online 'gift' would encourage the recipient to donate to the museum or be reminded when they saw the wallpaper on their device. Recently a visitor to the museum showed the curator their phone which still had the image they had been sent. They felt a sense of connection to the museum through this and had eventually been able to visit the museum from out of town.⁹⁵

The Gift Project

Gift is the culmination of a three-year research project which started in 2016. Funded by European funding stream, Horizon 2020, it looks at how mobile apps can enhance experiences in physical spaces. The 'app' is part of a wider GIFT project which aimed to help museums create deeper and more meaningful experiences by giving visitors the tools to tell their own stories. It involves 10 museums and universities from across Europe and the US.⁹⁶ The project looked at the experience of the physical museum and digital assets together. The focus was on the experience of gifting where a visitor

⁹⁵ Interview with Eliza Ward, Director of Development, The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum (May 23, 2019).

⁹⁶ Anders Sundnes Lovlie, Steve Benford, Jocelyn Spence, Timothy Wray, Christian Hviid Mortensen, Anne Olesen, Linda Rogberg, Ben Bedwell, Dimitrios Darzentas and Annika Waern "The GIFT Framework: Give Visitors the Tools to Tell Their Own Stories" (January 19, 2019) Accessed September 9, 2019. <https://mw19.mwconf.org/paper/the-gift-framework-give-visitors-the-tools-to-tell-their-own-stories/>

shared a digital gift of objects within the physical museum which are personal to the recipient. The Gift 'app' enables users to take a series of photos on their own smart phone along with audio recordings as they move around a museum. This is then compiled into a digital gift which can be sent to a friend, colleague – or perhaps a donor. The recipient should be in mind when the gift is being created so that it is personal to them. It is described as “a chance to create [their own] digital playlist from the museum collection”.⁹⁷ Although called an app, it runs from a website and therefore does not require a fast internet connection or lots of data use to download an app. It is also open source so can easily be adapted for a particular museum look or need. Through a fundraising lens, it could be used by museums to engage with donors. Curating a gift for them based around a known area of interest to either encourage a visit to the museum where the relationship can be cultivated face-to-face or form the first step in a conversation about donating to a particular need. The research carried out through the Gift project shows that gifting is a powerful social practice and requires a level of reciprocity. In the case of the fundraiser and donor this could be a useful tool to encourage a donation or further engagement or potentially larger donations.

Brighton Museums are trialing the app (June-October 2019). They have had a very positive experience of using it. Visitors have used it in a variety of ways. They have sent 'gifts' to friends and colleagues and school children have used it to create scavenger hunts. It could help to bring together an eclectic collection or highlight particular themes in a collection. There were very low up-front costs which included the access agreement for the code through the developers, Blast Theory, and then marketing materials to promote the 'app'. The museum has designed a postcard which every visitor is handed on arrival. It includes the weblink for the site. Front of house staff were also trained in how to use it.⁹⁸ Marketing the app to visitors is vital. Feedback from museums which have similar proprietary apps have found this is the biggest challenge.

⁹⁷ Blast Theory “The Gift App” Accessed on June 13, 2019. <https://gifting.digital/gift-exchange-app>

⁹⁸ Interview with Kevin Bacon, Digital Manager, Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove City Council (July 29, 2019)

For museums with a low budget for digital but the interest to expand engagement in this way, this could be a good solution. Although Blast Theory will stop work on the project at the end of this year, they will provide business support to anyone interested in using the app. A research report and evaluation of the Gift project will be published in October 2019.⁹⁹ The university partners have committed to maintain and develop the framework for at least two more years.

Conclusions

Through my Fellowship I have sought to identify good practice in the use of digital objects in a fundraising context. I wanted to shine a light on the potential that digital objects can play in supporting museum fundraisers as they seek to engage donors that are increasingly online. I have identified examples of this through the course of my research. My aim is that this research forms the start of a conversation on this topic with museum fundraisers, curators, digital professionals and museum leadership teams. The evidence that I have provided here can then be used to support these discussions, raise questions and consider the implications for each organization. This research has of course not taken place in isolation and meanwhile the UK government is investing in greater digitization in the cultural sector and at the same time donors in the US and UK at all levels are using digital technology in their daily lives more and more. This is a trend which looks set to continue. Museums have a fantastic unique resource in the form of their collections which can be used to engage audiences and donors in the growing digital world.

⁹⁹ Interview with Matt Adams, Blast Theory (September 6, 2019)

Fellowship Outputs: Sharing the Learning

- **Workshop** on August 5, 2019 at The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre in Havant, England. It was attended by 10 participants from museums in the South East Museums Development Programme (SEMDP): Bursledon Brickworks, Dinosaur Isle, The Diving Museum, Hampshire Cultural Trust, The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre; and Southampton Arts and Heritage. These museums were previously part of the Inspiring a Culture of Philanthropy Programme.
- **Presentation** on September 24, 2019 to SCLDA, the Smithsonian Women's Committee and others that have been involved in my research.
- **Research Report** shared with SCLDA and SEMDP
- **Introduction to the Learning Lab** online workshop provided by SCLDA to museums in the SEMDP region.
- **Development of a digitized collection** in the Learning Lab with a museum in the UK which took part in the August workshop. The collection will bring together their digitized objects and link them to relevant Smithsonian objects in a Learning Lab collection for use by educators and wider engagement.

Acknowledgements

I am thankful to everyone at the **Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access** for welcoming me into the unit and taking time to explain their work. I would like to thank: **Cara Seitchek**, Senior Advancement Specialist, Director, for being my fellowship supervisor and providing me with advice throughout; **Stephanie Norby**, Director, for useful contacts and engaging with museums in the UK; and **Tracie Spinale**, Learning Programs Manager, for your organization and support throughout my Fellowship.

I would also like to thank the **Smithsonian Women's Committee** for their generous support in funding the Fellowship in Museum Practice.

During my fellowship the following people have given up their time to meet with me. I am grateful to them all for answering my questions and providing me with their insight.

Matt Adams, Blast Theory

Kevin Bacon, Digital Manager, Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove City Council

Ashley Bennett, Director of Foundation Relations, Office of Advancement, Smithsonian Institution

Kate Birch, Individual Giving and Major Gifts Manager, The British Library

Katrina Burton, Museum Development Officer, South East Museums Development Programme

Michele Burton, Head of Fundraising, The British Library

Martin Kalfatovic, Associate Director Digital Programs and Initiatives, Smithsonian Libraries

Effie Kapsalis, Senior Digital Program Officer for Digital Strategy, Office of Under Sec for Museums and Research Provost, Smithsonian Institution

Anna Karvellas, Program Manager, Philanthropy Initiative, National Museum of American History

Lara Koch, Director, Online Engagement and Fundraising, Office of Advancement, Smithsonian Institution

Matthew Lindsay, Executive Director, Marketing Communications Development and Alumni Relations, The George Washington University

Stephen Lowy, Museum Development Officer, South East Museums Development Programme

Sarah Madden, Tech Champion South West Region, Digital Culture Network, Arts Council England

Adam Metallo, Senior 3D Program Officer, Research and Education Impact, Office of Chief Information Officer, Smithsonian Institution

Katie Moffat, Head of Digital, The Audience Agency

Amanda Moniz, Museum Curator, Work and Industry, National Museum of American History

Adrian Murphy, Collections Manager, Europeana

Japp Otte, Director of Development, Office of Chief Information Officer, Smithsonian Institution

Eliza Ward, Director of Development, The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum

I have also accessed resources at the following locations:

Candid/The Foundation Center, Washington DC

The Library of Congress, Washington DC

Museum Studies Research Library, Smithsonian Libraries, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Washington DC

Bibliography

Arts Council England and Nesta “Digital Culture Survey 2017” cited in HM Government *Culture is Digital: Executive Summary* (March 2018) Accessed on June 28, 2019. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686725/Culture is Digital Executive summary 1 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686725/Culture_is_Digital_Executive_summary_1_.pdf)

Barnes, Sally-Anne Kispeter, Erika Eikhof Doris Ruth and Parry Ross *One by One Building Digitally Confident Museums: Mapping the Museum Digital Skills Ecosystem: Phase One Report*. Leicester: University of Leicester, 2018. Accessed on June 24, 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital-june-2019-progress-report>

Blackbaud Institute for Philanthropic Impact *Charitable Giving Report: How Fundraising Performed in 2018* (February 2019) Accessed on May 11, 2019. <https://institute.blackbaud.com/asset/2018-charitable-giving-report/>

Blast Theory “The Gift App” Accessed on June 13, 2019. <https://gifting.digital/gift-exchange-app>

Brooks Hopkins, Karen and Stopler Friedman, Carolyn *Successful Fundraising for Arts and Cultural Organisations*. Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press, 1997.

Buck, T. Clay ‘How data, technology and social media are affecting fundraising’ in Barbara O’Reilly ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3*. Rogare, v1.1 April 2019.

Chan Sebastian and Cope, Aaron ‘Strategies against Architecture: Interactive Media and Transformative Technology at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum’, *Curator: The Museum Journal*, Vol 58, Issue 3 (July 2015): 352-368.

Charities Aid Foundation *CAF UK Giving 2019: An overview of charitable giving in the UK* (May 2019) Accessed May 20, 2019. https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf-uk-giving-2019-report-an-overview-of-charitable-giving-in-the-uk.pdf?sfvrsn=c4a29a40_4

Clough, Dixie *People follow People: The key to a successful YouTube Strategy for Museums* (November 2011)

Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum “Collections” Accessed on June 15, 2019. <https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/>

Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum “Using The Pen” Accessed on June 15, 2019. <https://www.cooperhewitt.org/events/current-exhibitions/using-the-pen/>

Davis, Rhodri *Give Me a Break: Why the UK should not aspire to a “US-style” culture of charitable giving*. CAF, February 2014. Accessed on June 20, 2019.

<https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/give-me-a-break--giving-thought-discussion-paper-no-1.pdf>

Esten, Emily *Documenting the Use of the Smithsonian Learning Lab Among Smithsonian Museums, Research Centers and Other Programmatic Offices* (August 2017) Accessed April 24, 2019. [https://learninglab.si.edu/cabinet/file/edc7e1f0-fc84-40eb-8cd2-cdf51ad7958a/Smithsonian-SCLDA InternalLearningLabUsage Report.pdf](https://learninglab.si.edu/cabinet/file/edc7e1f0-fc84-40eb-8cd2-cdf51ad7958a/Smithsonian-SCLDA%20InternalLearningLabUsage%20Report.pdf) , 28.

Eudy, Victoria 'Dr Seuss, Systems, and Digital Strategies: Making Sense of Systems Theory as an Emerging Museum Professional' in Jung, Yuha and Rowson Love, Anne ed. *Systems Thinking in Museums: Theory and Practice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017.

Europeana "Collections" Accessed September 12, 2019. <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en>

Foundation Center *Foundation Directory Online Professional* (2019) Accessed on April 25, 2019.

Giving USA, *Giving USA 2018: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2017*. Indiana: IUPUI, 2018.

Giving USA, *Giving USA 2019: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2018* (2019) Accessed on September 11, 2019. <https://givingusa.org/giving-usa-2019-americans-gave-427-71-billion-to-charity-in-2018-amid-complex-year-for-charitable-giving/>

Haynes, Emily and Theis, Michael 'Gifts to Charity Drops 1.7 Percent Last Year, Says 'Giving USA'' *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (June 18, 2019)

HM Government "Culture is Digital: June 2019 progress report" (June 24, 2019) Accessed on June 28, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital-june-2019-progress-report>

HM Government "Tax relief when you donate to a charity" Accessed on September 11, 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid>

HM Government "What Does Digitizing Collections Involve?" Accessed on June 28, 2019. <https://digitalpathways.weareculture24.org.uk/pathways/what-does-digitising-collections-involve/>

HM Government *Culture is Digital: Executive Summary*. HM Government, March 2018. Accessed on June 28, 2019. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686725/Culture is Digital Executive summary 1 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686725/Culture_is_Digital_Executive_summary_1.pdf)

HM Government *The Culture White Paper*. HM Government, March 2016. Accessed on June 15, 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510798/DCMS_The_Culture_White_Paper_3_.pdf

Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy “The Philanthropy Outlook: 2019 and 2020” Accessed May 15, 2019. <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/new-study-predicts-charitable-giving-will-increase-in-each-of-next-two-years-.html?id=287>

International Telecommunications Union “Country ICT Data, Individuals_Internet_2000-2018_June2019” Accessed August 29, 2019. www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stats/default.aspx

Kickstarter “Conserve Dorothy’s Ruby Slippers” Accessed on June 15, 2019. <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/smithsonian/conserve-dorothys-ruby-slippers>

Kickstarter “Reboot the Suit” Accessed June 15, 2019. <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/smithsonian/reboot-the-suit-bring-back-neil-armstrongs-spacesu>

Klasky, Ben ‘How Technology Will Soon Change the Way Americans Give’ *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (Opinion, March 5, 2019) Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/How-Technology-Will-Soon/245793>

Kressner Cobb, Nina ‘The New Philanthropy: Its Impact on Funding Arts and Culture’ *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* (2002, 32:2).

La Placa Cohen Advertising Inc *CultureTrack 2017* (2018) Accessed April 30, 2019. <https://s28475.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CT2017-Topline-Deck-1.pdf>

Maclean, Mairi ‘Identity, Storytelling And The Philanthropic Journey’ *Human Relations* (68:10, 2015)

McLeod, Katrina *New Theatre Fundraising Strategies* (Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 2018) Accessed on May 12, 2019. <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/McLeod%20K%202018%20Final.pdf>

MDG Advertising “It’s All About the Images: Infographic” (October 1, 2018) Accessed September 5, 2019 www.mdgadvertising.com/marketing-insights/infographics/its-all-about-the-images-infographic/

Mendoza, Neil *The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England*. HM Government, November 2017. Accessed on May 12, 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673935/The_Mendoza_Review_an_independent_review_of_museums_in_England.pdf

Moody, Michael and Goldseker, Sharna *Next Gen Donors: Respecting Legacy, Revolutionizing Philanthropy* (Johnson Center for Philanthropy and 21/64, July 2013).

Museums and Heritage “Innovation in Museums: how the Arts Council is spurring digital transformation” (March 5, 2019) Accessed on May 21, 2019
<https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/innovation-museums-arts-council-spurring-digital-transformation>

Nielsen, Waldemar A *Inside American Philanthropy: The Dramas of Donorship*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.

O’Reilly, Barbara ‘Introduction’ in O’Reilly, Barbara ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3*. Rogare, v1.1 April 2019.

Ostrower, Francis *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Radbourne, Jennifer and Watkins, Kenneth *Philanthropy and the Arts*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015.

Sargeant, Adrian and Jay, Elaine. *Fundraising Management: Analysis, planning and practice*. Oxford: Routledge, 2014.

Smith, J ‘Mobile eCommerce stats in 2018 and the future trends of eCommerce’ (2018) cited in Buck, T Clay ‘How data, technology and social media are affecting fundraising’ in O’Reilly, Barbara ed. *United States of America: Critical Fundraising Report #3*. Rogare, v1.1 April 2019.

Smithsonian Institution “Facts about the Smithsonian Institution: Media Fact Sheet” (February 14, 2019) Accessed on July 26, 2019.
<https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/factsheets/facts-about-smithsonian-institution-short>

Smithsonian Institution *Smithsonian Strategic Plan 2017-22*. Smithsonian Institution, 2017) Accessed on April 24, 2019.
<https://www.si.edu/sites/default/files/about/smithsonian-2022-strategic-plan.pdf>

Speech by Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (December 8, 2010) Accessed September 19, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/philanthropy-keynote-speech>

Suler, John “The Psychological Impact of Image Streams Photographic Psychology: Image and Psyche” Accessed September 5, 2019.
https://users.rider.edu/~sulerphotopsy/impact_stream.htm

Sundnes Lovlie, Anders Benford, Steve Spence, Jocelyn Wray, Timothy Hviid Mortensen, Christian Olesen, Anne Rogberg, Linda Bedwell, Ben Darzentas, Dimitrios and Waern, Annika “The GIFT Framework: Give Visitors the Tools to Tell Their Own Stories” (January 19, 2019) Accessed September 9, 2019.

<https://mw19.mwconf.org/paper/the-gift-framework-give-visitors-the-tools-to-tell-their-own-stories/>

The Resource Alliance “Storytelling: The Most Powerful Way to Get Your Fundraising Message Across – The Resource Alliance” Accessed May 15, 2019. <https://resource-alliance.org/storytelling-the-most-powerful-way-to-get-your-fundraising-message-across-2>

Thomas, Selma ‘Introduction’ in Herminia Din and Phyllis Hecht ed. *The Digital Museum: A Think Guide*. American Association of Museums, 2007.

Valverde, Will *Benchmarks 2019* (2019) Accessed June 10, 2019
www.mrbenchmarks.com

Warwick, Mal ‘The Emerging Gold Standard of Integrated Fundraising’ in Ferguson, Daryl E. Warwick, Mal Carlson, Mim Hart, Ted Allen, Nick ed. *Fundraising on the Internet: The ePhilanthropy-Foundation.Org’s Guide to Success Online*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Women’s Philanthropy Initiative *Gender Differences in Giving Tuesday Participation*. Indianapolis: Lily Family School of Philanthropy, December 2017.

Zunz, Oliver *Philanthropy in American: a history*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.