



## How did museums fare over the summer?

### The Art Fund Museum Survey

#### March - September 2009

Independent charity The Art Fund has undertaken research to find out how UK museums and galleries are faring in the recession

**225** museums took part in The Art Fund's survey. Respondents ranged from smaller independent museums to national institutions, including the V&A, Natural History Museum and Tate

The survey covers the 2009 spring/summer period (the six months from 1 March to 1 September 2009)

The next survey will take place in Spring 2010, and will focus on collecting activity

#### The Art Fund

We are an independent charity committed to saving art for everyone to enjoy. Since we began in 1903, we have helped to save over 860,000 works of art.

Today, some 80,000 members fund our work. In return, they receive free or reduced-price admission to many museums and galleries. This is not the only reason they join: they support us because they love art.

#### Visitors (and visitor spending) soared over the summer...

As predicted, UK museums benefited from the "great staycation" - and the knock-on increase in visitor spending

**50%** of UK museums saw an increase in visits, with 20% reporting a rise of over 10% on the same period last year

The rise was greatest in national museums - **66%** (two-thirds) saw an increase in summer visits. Around **60%** of museums that saw extra visitors offer free entry, though many also staged paying exhibitions, so free admission was not the only draw

Other reasons cited for the increase include more people holidaying at home over the summer, the weather, and strong exhibition programmes

**45%** of museums saw a knock-on increase in trading income from on-site shops and cafes (**53%** of national museums)

*"Our programme this spring/summer has been more popular than the previous year - Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones in particular attracted a large number of visitors. Also in the current economic climate free admission must influence visitors' choice of outing."* V&A (which reported 1.2m visitors in the last six months, a more than 10% increase)

*"Trading income has increased as a result of increased visitor numbers and retail spend per visitor is particularly strong as a result of improved product and refurbished shops at IWM London and IWM North."* Imperial War Museum

#### ...but cuts elsewhere mean overall income is static

Museum income has remained roughly static but public funding, investment income and corporate spending has fallen

Half of museums that receive public funding saw no change from this source but **26%** - one in four - saw a cut

This was significantly higher in local-authority funded museums - **34%** (one in three) saw a cut in council funding

Museums were also hit by a drop in investment income - **41%** saw a fall. National museums were hardest hit - **67%** (two-thirds) suffered a decrease and in almost every case the drop was **greater than 10%**. Museums have also seen a fall in corporate venue hire

A number of local authority funded museums have been hit by cuts to their share of the government's *Renaissance in the Regions* programme, and many were concerned about the future of this scheme

*"Investment income has been affected with net returns estimated to reduce by 60% in comparison to the previous year."* Imperial War Museum

*"We have not cancelled any events but events due to be held here have been cancelled by third parties."* A national museum in London

*"We have no more fat to trim - services provided will have to be assessed and, reluctantly, reduced."* Tain and District Museum

**“The biggest increase has been due to international tourists, with the general weakness of sterling... The most popular site has been dressed in banners to make free entry clear and the facade less imposing.”**

National Galleries of Scotland (which reported 705,074 visits in the last six months, a more than 10% increase)

**“Finances are increasingly tight with reduced grants, sponsorship and donations. With fewer funds to stage paying exhibitions, there will be less income from this source also.”**

A national museum in London

## Expenditure has soared

### Museum spending has risen, with many blaming inflated energy bills and other running costs

Almost one-third (30%) of museums spent more than they did this time last year

Increases in utility bills and other running costs come up again and again as the reason for this. Other reasons include building works and maintenance, and the knock-on effect of more visitors through the door

44% saw no significant change in spending – but most of these museums complained they had been forced to tighten their belts in line with budget cuts or freezes

Museums are spending less on collecting: under half attempted to add to their collections (down from 60% in our first survey). But where museums are acquiring, they are securing healthy discounts, often of 30% or more. The next survey will focus on collecting activity

*“Despite shopping around for cheaper suppliers, our utility bills have more than doubled in recent years to around £5,500 this year. Our consumption has gone down but unit costs have risen.”* An Independent Museum in the North West



Silver-gilt vessel from the Vale of York Hoard, jointly acquired by Yorkshire Museums Trust and the British Museum.  
ArtFunded 2009 © Trustees of the British Museum

## The workforce is being replaced by volunteers

### The rise in volunteers has mirrored a fall in paid posts

22% of museums saw a fall in the number of paid staff (64% no change)

25% have seen an increase in volunteers (64% no change)

Although these results were not always reported by the same institutions, there is a clear trend of reliance on volunteers emerging

Budget cuts, recruitment freezes, posts being merged and redundancies were the key factors in the reduction of staff

People choosing to volunteer for museums after having been made redundant from other paid roles, or students looking for work experience, are common themes

Many museums reported improvements to their volunteering schemes, although some were concerned that they lacked paid staff to adequately supervise volunteers

*“We had to make cost savings due to increased utility costs, rent charges and building maintenance costs and we have had to make our last full time post redundant.”* Independent Museum in East of England

*“The core revenue budget from the local authority has been cut, so savings have had to be made, including non-filling of vacancies arising from staff retirement.”* Local Authority Museum in the North West

*“We have seen a large increase in volunteers. Redundancies mean that people want to keep occupied and update their CVs.”* Independent Museum in the North West

## Looking to the future

### Predictions for the coming year are gloomy, with many expecting further cuts and exhibitions and events to be scaled down

7% have so far had to cancel a programme or event and the recession is informing planning for next year so that projects are less ambitious or are being scaled back. Further cuts and less frequent exhibition change-overs are expected

As corporate hire and sponsorship is down, there is currently more focus on drumming up support from individuals – this is expected to continue

There is widespread concern that care for collections will suffer due to cuts and extra pressures on existing staff

*“The recession hasn't, so far, affected our programmes and events. However, if there are to be future cuts in public funding, this may change.”* The National Gallery, London

*“Visitor numbers will continue to be robust due to the attraction of free entry. However, government support is likely to be under severe pressure while other forms of income, including trading and corporate sponsorship, will be squeezed.”* National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh

*“In terms of local government funding and Renaissance support, we can expect decreases in resources, efficiency savings and perhaps a reintroduction of charging for training courses and other support.”* Buxton Museum and Art Gallery