



SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON

Burlington House

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UKRI

National Research Infrastructure Roadmap – Progress Report.

Response from the **Society of Antiquaries of London**

29th April 2019

The Society welcomes the UKRI's initiative and would very strongly endorse the creation of an arts and humanities research infrastructure funding stream as part of the road map.

Introduction

The Society of Antiquaries of London (SAL) was constituted as a Society In 1717. A Royal Charter of 1751 established the Society with its formal mission and governance system, and provided a framework from which the Society could meet its aims which are

'The encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries.' (Royal Charter, Society of Antiquaries, 1751).

The care of the Society's collections and archives remains central to the Society's purpose, alongside dissemination of knowledge, encouragement of research and public engagement.

This puts the Society in a unique position to embody the principles of the UKRI's National Research Infrastructure Roadmap as the fellows of the Society are drawn from a wide ranging field of disciplines, from art history and archaeology to the digital dissemination of knowledge, the science of conservation, and heritage resource management.

This is also embodied in AHRC's Heritage Strategy which summarises the importance of Heritage to the UK:

*'Heritage represents the accumulated diverse collections, material traces, knowledge, practices, skills, places and institutions on which we draw to bring the past into the present and to stimulate reflection on the future. It forms the evolving collective cultural memories of societies, acting as a source of artistic, literary, and scientific inspiration, creativity and enterprise for current and future generations. It contributes to diverse and changing identities and can provide the basis for the exchange (and contesting) of ideas, learning and knowledge between and across cultures and generations.'*¹

The Society's strategic goals and intentions also illustrate these points

- To promote and support Conservation, Research and Dissemination relating to the material remains of the past.
- To engage, enthuse and foster the Fellowship and staff in pursuing the aims of the Society to further our understanding of the past and influence the heritage sector and the general public.

¹ <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/strategy/heritage-strategy/> March 2018

- To conserve and develop the research and educational potential of the buildings, collections and library at Burlington House and Kelmscott Manor and to make these resources more accessible to Fellows and the wider public.

The Society of Antiquaries of Museum Collections

The Society effectively acted as a national museum for British antiquities before public museums were given this statutory role in the mid-nineteenth century. Today the registered collections of the Society form a key resource for research and learning in archaeology, the decorative and applied arts and architectural history, and in the wider study of material culture. Although a small collection, it includes objects of national and international importance.

The museum collections support the Society's primary objectives and charitable aims to promote and facilitate research into the history of the United Kingdom and other countries, and in particular to document the development of the discipline of archaeology and related subjects since the Society's foundation in 1707.

The Accredited museum collection comprises archaeological artefacts spanning the Pre-historic to the early post-medieval period, paintings, and seal impressions.

The Society of Antiquaries Library

Alongside the museum collections the resources in the library are equally important.

The Society has an internationally significant historic library in the subjects of archaeology, architectural history and other antiquarian subjects. Used by researchers from around the world it holds the Society's archives, manuscripts (dating from the 10th century), printed books (dating from 1471), periodicals, and prints and drawings.

The origins of the library go back to 1718 when the Director was ordered 'to provide us a box to lay up the books in', and in 1719 the first book was purchased. The Library has much that cannot be found elsewhere. There are about 130,000 books from the 15th century to the present day. The main subjects covered are British and European archaeology, architectural history, the historic environment, British local history, early decorative arts, and heraldry. Special collections include 2,000 proclamations and 1,000 broadsides from the 15th to 19th centuries, the Lowther collection of 1,400 Civil War tracts, and the Fairholt Collection on pageantry, to name just a few. There are around 3,000 current and historic British and foreign periodicals and series publications. The collection is particularly strong in foreign journals not available elsewhere, and British county historical and archaeological journals and record society publications.

The Society's archives date from the first formal meeting on 1 January 1718 and are an unbroken record of its existence and activities. The archives are significant because as the earliest antiquarian society in the country they record and document the formation of a scholarly community with shared interests specialising in the understanding and interpretation of material culture and the development of disciplines such as archaeology. The inclusion of drawings, impressions and engravings alongside written accounts in official minutes is sometimes the only known record of objects since lost or destroyed.

The collection of just over 1,020 manuscripts ranges in date from the 10th to 20th centuries and include notable items such as the 12th century Winton Domesday, the 1547 Inventory of Henry VIII, and several illuminated manuscripts to large 18th and 19th century collections, such as the Prattinton Collection on Worcestershire, Jackson Collection on Wiltshire, and Willson Collection on Lincolnshire.

Dating mostly from the 18th and 19th centuries, the prints and drawings collection contains up to 25,000 items and forms one of the largest on British topography and antiquities in the country. It can be divided into prints and drawings commissioned and published by the Society, gifts and

bequests, manuscripts with drawings, illustrations in the Society's minutes, extra illustrated books, and photographic collections including the Society's own collection of lantern slides.

The Society of Antiquaries of London (SAL) can address many of the themes of the UKRI roadmap but particularly No 4

- Theme 1: Economics and productivity
21st century skills and future of mobility
The SAL promotes training of heritage professionals both in-house and by providing premises in the capital city of the UK for training to take place.
- Theme 2: Next generation public services
Next generation public services UK
The SAL is constantly seeking to engage in cutting edge research *related to better understanding and preservation of cultural heritage*.
- Theme 3: Changing world
Open discovery UK
The SAL is particularly keen to make its collections and premises accessible to all and is a champion for local and regional heritage groups, including supporting its own regional branches of the Society.
- Theme 4: Addressing environmental challenges
Accessibility
Although at present the Society is limited by the lack of funding and resource it is committed to:
 - Encouraging and supporting the maintenance and development of the museum collections at Burlington House and Kelmscott Manor.
 - Ensuring the Library and Museum Collections are adequately conserved, preserved and securely housed.
 - Promoting awareness and use of the collections and improving access through temporary loans and exhibitions.
 - Improving and widening access to the Library and Museum resources and services and making them better known.
 - Discussing strategic requirements and priorities which will inform the budget setting for the library and collections and fundraising priorities.
- Theme 5: Creative economy
Creative economy
The SAL is committed to complying with FAIR data management.
- Theme 6: Understanding and maintaining cultural heritage
Diversity and inclusiveness UK
The SAL is particularly keen to address *creating new models of participatory research, including citizen science* as it fulfils the duties of its charitable status.
The SAL also keen to address its *currently fragmented, dispersed, underused facilities* to enable greater accessibility.

Understanding and maintaining cultural heritage

The SAL is a recognised body in the heritage sector that regularly advises **on** heritage matters from Government initiatives such as road schemes to support for the loss of heritage assets.

- Theme 7: International development

International Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities infrastructures

The SAL often hosts international conferences and symposia on a wide range of disciplines from across the heritage sector. Not least many items from the Society's collections have been loaned to national and international venues and National Museums.

One example of the use of the Society's collections was a very successful outreach event based on a portrait of Mary 1st which hangs in the Society's meeting room.



This outreach event at Burlington House (15 Feb 2019) focused on the portrait of Queen Mary I by Hans Eworth, one of the most stunning paintings in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries of London. Highlighting Mary I (1553-58) as the first female ruler of England, 'Mary's Hand' brought the portrait and its context back to life in an interactive operatic performance by McCaldin Arts and public lecture by Tudor historian Dr John Cooper FSA.

Eworth painted Queen Mary as a potential bride, her pale skin and magnificent jewellery calculated to impress Philip II of Spain. Wearing a replica of Mary's dress researched from Eworth's portrait, mezzo-soprano Clare McCaldin evoked episodes in the life of 'Bloody Mary' in a powerful score by Martin Bussey. Fellow John Cooper's introductory lecture explored Mary's hand in government and the obstacles she faced as England's first ruling queen. An accompanying exhibition showcased treasures from the Society's collections including the original proclamations of both Queen Mary and Jane Grey. As a unique coming-together of art, music, historical research and re-enactment, 'Mary's Hand' brought a new audience to Burlington House to engage with one of Tudor England's finest paintings.

A comment from a member of the audience;

The presentation of Mary's Hand in the Society of Antiquaries was a fascinating glimpse into the life and world of a monarch we knew surprisingly little about introduced by a wonderful synopsis by fellow Dr John Cooper. The intimate setting with the original portrait on display set the scene, but it was the superbly designed and modelled costume that brought the portrait to life.

The presentation, deceptively simple in its construction was a revelation. The mezzo soprano's superb voice gave Mary's story an emotional edge which completely absorbed the audience. A touch of humour and the elegantly presented interactive elements added a sense of fun and left us longing for more. The addition of a trio of musicians playing instruments which reflected the period enhanced the performance and the whole can only be described as a wonderful experience which we felt very privileged to enjoy.

Case Studies

Two case studies illustrate the range of scholarship and outreach that the Society of Antiquaries of London promotes which need investment.

Case Study 1: The Library and Collections Strategic Plan

The Society of Antiquaries museum collection comprises over 45,000 objects stored and displayed across two sites: Burlington House in London and Kelmscott Manor in Gloucestershire. The collection represents material culture and fine and decorative art collected by the Society, as well as objects associated with the development of the Society itself, and its own position as an organisation of historic standing.

The Society's museum collections at Burlington House are also pre-eminent for the study of the history of collecting, together with the discipline of archaeology and related historic material culture studies in Britain and other countries. They span the prehistoric period to the 19th century, and predominantly represent the history, archaeology and art of the British Isles. Likewise, a core element of the Society's collections relates to its own history and development. There is a smaller percentage of continental and world culture objects, and likewise a smaller number of objects relating to the Society's history in more recent years. The Society holds no supporting collections such as handling or reference collections.

Since 1962 the Society has owned and cared for Kelmscott Manor and estate in Gloucestershire, the country home of William Morris. The collections at Kelmscott Manor, represents the applied and decorative arts produced or collected by the Manor's residents, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane and May Morris. The collection at Kelmscott Manor also relates to its pre-Morris occupancy by the Turner family, with fine examples of 17th century furnishings and internal decorative fixtures and fittings dating from this period. Some of the objects represent the deeply personal, while others represent the wider arts and crafts movement, its partnerships between designers and makers, and the intimate interaction between the residents of the Manor, and its wider agricultural landscape. The Society wishes to make these outstanding collections more accessible both to scholars and the general public. As a society privately owned by its members the SAL receives no public funding but yet is holding these national and internationally important collections which are relatively unknown on behalf of the nation.

With suitable resourcing the potential for outreach could be achieved more quickly and successfully than through the Society's own resources.

Case Study 2: Kelmscott Manor Development Project



'A Heaven on Earth...'

Kelmscott Manor was the inspirational Cotswold retreat of William Morris, his family, friends and colleagues.

When Morris first saw the Manor in 1871, he was delighted by this 'loveliest haunt of ancient peace'; he signed a joint lease for the property with his friend and colleague Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the Pre-Raphaelite artist.

The fascinating and important collections at Kelmscott Manor span more than 300 years and reflect the history, ideas and creative legacy of those who lived and worked here. Originally home to successful yeoman farmers, in 1871 it became a place of relaxation and inspiration for Father of the Arts & Crafts movement William Morris (1834-1896), his family and his friends.

Planning permission has recently been granted for the society to carry out a development project grant-aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund entitled 'Kelmscott and Morris: Past, Present and Future'.

The project includes major conservation and sensitive development of the estate to sustain this fragile piece of our national heritage:

- comprehensive and vital repairs to Kelmscott Manor and its farm buildings;
- addition of facilities to support educational activities;
- creation of a versatile space for an artist-in-residence and activities for visitors of all ages;
- implementation of a craft skills programme;
- provision for temporary exhibitions exploring Morris's work and life;
- development of research and study courses to engage visitors in the archaeology of the local landscape and built environment;
- carefully considered improvements to the tearoom, shop and toilet facilities



While the Society has been in receipt of funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund there is still a shortfall of funding to preserve this example of infrastructure as 'place' unique in the history of the Arts and Crafts movement in the UK. The building houses nationally and internationally important collections related to William Morris whose influence is recognised across the world.

In summary, the Society of Antiquaries of London welcomes the initiative by UKRI to provide a roadmap for the infrastructure required to promote research and innovation and would be pleased to participate in further consultation.

Submitted by:

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General Secretary

On behalf of the Policy Committee
Society of Antiquaries of London