In Between the Cracks: research functions of the UK national cultural organisations

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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I, Maja Maricevic, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis advances our knowledge of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations in the second half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st century. Based on archival research and interviews with professionals in the UK national cultural organisations and relevant governmental bodies, the thesis explores the current state of research and how research functions in the UK national cultural organisations relate to the UK cultural and science policy. The thesis also considers the nature of institutional relationships with the UK government, especially in relation to the governmental fragmentation related to different functions of the UK national cultural organisations. The thesis considers the effect of this fragmentation on institutional research functions.

Using three case studies, from the British Museum, the British Library and the Natural History Museum, the thesis looks at the changes in research functions in the context of institutional changes in the second part of the 20th century, with a series of critical junctures identified during the 1990s. At this time, the changes in funding, policy, and organisational priorities, led to a change from traditional curatorial research models towards more project-based, shorter term, externally funded research models. The case studies explore the role of institutional governance in relation to institutional research functions and investigate the changing understanding of research in the UK national cultural organisations.

The thesis creates a new framework for this neglected area of research, showing the importance of connecting our understanding of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations with government policy and the context of broader institutional changes, thus opening new directions for future research and policy development.
Impact statement

This thesis aims to broaden our knowledge of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, exploring both historic and current policy and organisational issues. This work has potential to strengthen policy and practice in the relevant government departments and in the institutions themselves. The thesis offers extensive policy analysis, including both successes and issues arising from the past policy frameworks in both culture and science, which means that the thesis’ findings are directly applicable to today’s policy context.

Conclusions and Recommendations in Chapter 9 (see page 364) of this thesis offer a set of policy recommendations that could be used to enhance research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. The policy recommendations address the areas of - (1) policy and cross-government alignment; (2) research infrastructure; (3) research capacity building; (4) institutional governance and reporting; and (5) collaboration with higher education. These recommendations could be used as a springboard to improve policy and practice in the UK national organisations. They are especially relevant for the following government departments and arms-length bodies - Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

While the thesis does not directly explore the issues faced by smaller galleries, libraries archives and museums (GLAM), or issues specific to the UK nations and regions, or the GLAM organisations outside the UK, the findings are relevant in all these contexts, especially where different GLAM organisations might be experiencing decline of their research capacity, or where they collaborate with the UK national cultural organisations.

The findings are relevant for the types of research focusing on the global grand challenges such as climate change, biodiversity, and deployment of AI and other new technologies. The findings indicate the future potential for the UK national cultural institutions to advance their research in the ways that would contribute to advancements in these areas, which are the priority for the
UK science policy, as well as being significant for global science.

The findings of this study are also relevant for individual institutions and could be used to help them to improve their internal understanding, strategies, and structuring of research functions. This thesis could also provide useful guidance for strengthening links between public and research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

The findings of this work broaden our understanding of policy drivers, institutional context, and priorities for research in the UK national cultural organisations. The findings of this thesis could be used to develop much stronger cross-sectoral research collaborations, especially between the UK national cultural institutions and universities. While the UK national cultural organisations and universities frequently collaborate, these collaborations often experience difficulties arising from the lack of understanding of their different sectoral contexts. The findings highlight the key issues arising, which could be used to strengthen future collaborations and to improve impacts of cross-sectoral collaborative research.
Acknowledgements

In memoriam

Donka Maričević (1937-2023)

Tim Schadla-Hall (1947-2023)

This thesis would have been impossible to complete without several amazing people who are not with us any longer.

My mother, Donka Maričević, passed away just before my viva. I will always remember her advice that ‘real life’ matters more than academic achievements and work. Mum also kept asking me if the thesis mentions my Bosnian origins, which deeply mattered to her. While not apparent in the thesis itself, Bosnia and its recent history inform my conviction that museums and libraries hold special relevance in shaping answers to the complex questions that our societies face. The books I used to research my first undergraduate dissertation were destroyed when the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina burnt to the ground during the siege of Sarajevo in August 1992. As a young researcher I saw the future rather than the past disappearing in the flames. This background adds to my strong feelings about frequently inadequate attention afforded to cultural assets held in the UK, especially when it comes to failing to use them for research that could transform our future understanding of the world. Mum considered this important to mention.

Also, it was immensely sad not to have one of my supervisors, Tim Schadla-Hall, see the end of this work. Tim also passed away just before this thesis was finalised. Tim’s advice and encouragement were invaluable for this research, especially his keen understanding that government and cultural institutions are often a chaotic maze of chance events and individual connections, which is a view we shared, and which, I hope, this work reflects.

I am extremely grateful to my joint principal supervisor, Gabriel Moshenska, who was the first to believe in the value of my original hypothesis and framing of key issues explored in this thesis. His help in making my
thinking much more robust and focused has been invaluable. I am grateful for his advice and patience, and especially his understanding of the need to accommodate both practitioner and academic perspectives in my work.

This thesis has been made possible through the generosity of everyone who agreed to be interviewed for this work. I am grateful to all my interviewees for their time and thoughtful contributions, including their readiness to explain difficult issues with integrity and openness. Their love of many diverse national collections illuminated the conversations that underpin this thesis. I will always treasure the often-expressed conviction that advancing research is at the heart of their public service.

I am grateful to the archivists and librarians at the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the British Library for their advice and for helping me track down relevant documents. My heart skipped a beat more than once when archival documents revealed an unexpected voice from the past or added a new layer of meaning to my research. I am indebted to Ann Clarke at the British Library, who shared her unparalleled knowledge of strategic planning processes at the British Library and helped me to track down every single British Library strategy. Without her knowledge, it would have been much more difficult to understand how it all fits together.

Many thanks to Darko Maričević and Colette Taylor for their encouragement and advice, especially at those times when I could not see the wood for the trees. Also, many thanks to Adrian Babbidge, who read parts of this thesis and offered useful comments and insight. Amongst those no longer here, I am grateful to the late Alison Weisskopf, who, together with Emma Jenkins, convinced me that spending seven years working on PhD, in my 50s, while working full-time, is not impossible. Also, many thanks to the British Library for adopting flexible working policies that made this easier to achieve.

My thanks also go to Don and Marion Cameron, the rest of my family and all my friends for their patience over so many years with very little time for fun and ‘real life’. 
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Abbreviations

ACE – Arts Council England
AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council
AI – artificial intelligence
ALB – Arms-length body
APPG – All-Party Parliamentary Group
Aslib – Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux
ATI – Alan Turing Institute
BBSRC – Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
BEIS – Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BERR – Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
BL – British Library
BM – British Museum
BNB – British National Bibliography
BSBI - Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland
CEBR – Centre for Economics and Business Research
CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CST – Council for Science and Technology
DCMS – Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families
Defra – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DES – Department for Education and Science
DfES – Department for Education and Skills
DIUS – Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DNA – Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DNH – Department of National Heritage
DOI – digital object identifier
DSIR – Department of Scientific and Industrial Research
DSTI – Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
EPSRC – Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
ESFRI – European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council
FIGIT – Follett Implementation Group for IT
FTE – Full-time equivalent
GCRF - Global Challenges Research Fund
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GLAM – Galleries, libraries, museums and archives
GVA – Gross Value Added
HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW – Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HR – Human Resources
ICM – ICM Unlimited, name of a social research consultancy firm
IRO – Independent Research Organisation
JNCC – Joint Nature Conservation Committee
KCL – Kings College London
KEF – Knowledge Exchange Framework
KPI – Key Performance Indicator
MLA – Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
MP – Member of Parliament
MGC – Museums and Galleries Commission
MRC – Medical Research Council
NCL – National Central Library
NDPB – Non-departmental Public Body
NERC – Natural Environment Research Council
NHM – Natural History Museum London
NLHF – National Lottery Heritage Fund
NLLST – National Lending Library for Science and Technology
NMDC – National Museum Directors’ Council
NRLSI - National Reference Library of Science and Invention
OAL – Office for Arts and Libraries
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfS – Office for Students
ONS – Office for National Statistics
OST – Office of Science and Technology
OSTI – Office of Scientific and Technical Information
PCR – Polymerase Chain Reaction
PEG - Public Engagement Group
R&D – Research and Development
RAE – Research Assessment Exercise
RBG – Royal Botanic Garden
RBGK – Royal Botanic Garden Kew
RCUK – Research Councils UK
REF – Research Excellence Framework
RLSG – Research Libraries Support Group
RO – Research Organisation
RSA – Royal Society of Arts
SHEFC – Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
SPF – Strategic Priorities Fund
SQW – name of an economic and social development consultancy firm
STFC – Science and Technology Facilities Council
STM – Science, Technology and Medicine
TEF – Teaching Excellence Framework
TNA – The National Archives
UGC – Universities Grant Committee
UKRI – UK Research and Innovation
UKRR – UK Research Reserve
UKSPA – The United Kingdom’s Science Parks Association
UUK – Universities UK
V&A – Victoria and Albert Museum
VARI – V&A Research Institute
Volume I
1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate research functions in the UK national galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM), and is concerned with the type of activities where these institutions undertake research in one or a range of disciplines, either in their own right, or in collaboration with universities and other research organisations. The study is also looking at the cases where the UK national cultural organisations are providing research infrastructure and expertise that supports research conducted by others. In particular, it examines how research functions in the UK national cultural organisations might have changed because of the changing relationship between these organisations and the government in the second half of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century.

The UK national cultural sector is largely funded by government and nearly all its functions are affected by the government policy and funding provided by the state, which impact their research strategies and capabilities (Clarke 1991; Selwood 2001; DCMS 2017a). However, we have a limited understanding of the UK national cultural organisations as research institutions, including the nature of their research activities and the significance of their infrastructure in advancing research. In particular, the current literature rarely discusses institutional research functions in the light of governmental policies in either culture or science. It is intended that this investigation will add to our knowledge regarding the role that these institutions play within the UK research and science ecosystem.

The study focuses on the UK national cultural organisations, using the British Museum, the British Library, and the Natural History Museum as its case studies. The case studies were selected to enable us to consider different aspects of research in cultural organisations and key issues arising in different organisational and disciplinary contexts. The case study selection also enables us to examine three UK national cultural organisations with significant
concentration of research activity of many different types. The selection has also been made because these institutions have wide-ranging and documented dealings with the UK government.

The common origins of these three institutions, which were founded as one institution - British Museum - in 1753, provide an ideal base to examine key changes affecting the role of museums and libraries within the knowledge structures of the second half of the 20th century. As a parent institution, the British Museum was at the centre of the emerging concepts of the role of national museum and library in the context of scientific advances of the 18th century (Miller 1973; Wilson 2002; Anderson et. al. ed. 2003). The institutional links with the state can be traced back to the birth of museums in the 18th century, when both science and museums played a role in the development of nation states in Western Europe, underpinned by the idea that reason is a primary source of knowledge, progress, and authority (Habermas 1989; Gascoigne 2019). As three independent institutions, British Museum, British Library and National History Museum have continued to evolve their research roles and their relationships with the state. This study intends to examine these relationships and discuss the changing role of cultural institutions within research and scientific landscape of the second half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st century.

The policy aspects of this study cover the period from 1945 to 2020. The case studies are focused on the last three decades of the 20th century, especially looking at the issues emerging during the 1990s (Lucas et al. eds. 1990). The British Museum case study follows the work of the British Museum Scholarship Committee from 1974 to 2001, focusing on the changes taking place in the 1990s (BM Scholarship archival). The British Library case study looks at the British Library changing strategies and the policy environment surrounding its formation. It investigates the events leading the Dainton Report of the National Libraries Committee in 1969, which recommended the formation of the National Library Authority that is to become the British Library, (House of Commons 1969), and it concludes with the British Library strategy Living Knowledge in 2015 (BL 2015). The Natural History Museum case study sets the context of changes in taxonomy and systematic biology in the second
part of the 20th century, and it focuses on the UK science policy and the Museum’s organisational changes in the early 1990s (NHM DF941/4 archival; House of Lords 1992, 2002a, 2008).

While this study contains three detailed case studies, it is concerned with the whole of the UK national cultural sector. The intention is also to address the issues that are broader than those relevant for the museum sector only. In addition to the British Library case study, the study explores further examples from other libraries and archives, botanic gardens, and heritage organisations such as Historic England and National Trust. While these organisations have very different remits, they occupy very similar position in relation to the UK cultural and policy frameworks and they all have well developed research functions. This study considers a wide range of professional roles involved with research. In addition to the traditional focus on museum curators, it also includes librarians, archivists, horticulturalist, scientists, and other relevant professional roles involved with research. This is achieved through the inclusion of different types of organisations and their relevant staff in the interviews conducted for this study, as well as by considering documentation related to different types of UK national cultural organisations (V&A: Burrett 1982; V&A 2013a, 2013b; Adams 2013. Royal Botanic Gardens Kew: Defra 2010; House of Commons 2015a; Kew Gardens 2015. The National Archives: djs & Oxborrow-Cowan 2016. Historic England 2016b, 2017a,b&c). In addition to the role played by research active staff, the intent is also to shed light on the role of institutions themselves, especially as the impact of organisational changes on research functions has been particularly neglected by researchers to date.
1.2 Research genesis within a work and policy context

The research questions of this study have initially emerged from my work context at the British Library as the Library’s Head of Higher Education and Science. This role includes advocacy for continuing relevance of the British Library within higher education and science, initiating new partnerships and programmes, and formulating relevant policies and strategies. This is increasingly necessary as higher education and science sectors change quickly, and these changes do not automatically include consideration of the relevant functions in the UK national cultural organisations, including the British Library. This policy disconnect occurs, in part, because the new higher education and science policies are formed by the government departments and bodies outside of the British Library’s immediate governmental sphere and its own governmental sponsor body, which is Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The role includes advocating for internal organisational changes related to higher education and science, including for new developments and investments, most frequently with the background of constrained financial resources, and sometimes including the need to balance the requirements of the institution’s research functions with the equally relevant, but very different requirements of organisational functions such as cultural programming, learning programmes for families and young people, and support for business audiences. While all these functions are interconnected and ideally support each other, which is encouraged within the institution, they also have many different requirements, often resulting in competing claims on organisational resources. They respond to the needs of different types of users, and to different policy drivers. The absence of appropriate policy frameworks for research in the UK national cultural organisations makes it more difficult to link these different functions, thus affecting sustainability of research and science within the organisations.

This study’s development is rooted in a belief that professional practice, such as my own, but also across the UK cultural sector and further afield, would benefit from the improved understanding of research functions in
cultural organisations, and especially the way in which they are influenced by organisational interactions with governmental policy and actors. This would help us to understand any misalignments between the UK science and cultural policies, and if such issues could lead to a loss of key research and scientific capabilities in the UK national cultural organisations. This policy gap also means that we might be overlooking new opportunities to advance research and science. The events that took place in the second part of the 20th century (Lucas et al. eds. 1990; Gee 1990a&b, 1991; Gaimster 1999) are essential for our understanding of these issues today and the changes that have taken place from the late 1980s to today, but they have not been examined by researchers working within either cultural or science policy.

Cultural policy research tends to focus on examining mechanisms and impacts arising from the interaction of cultural institutions with government, different communities, and individual citizens, typically covering the issues such as economic and social outcomes and impacts of culture and the arts (Hesmondhalgh et. al. 2015; Belfiore 2009 & 2016; Bakhshi et. al. 2015), issues of diversity, representation and participation in culture and the arts (Coffee 2008; Notten et. al. 2015; Brook 2016), educational developments (Hanquinet & Savage 2012; Earle 2013; Balloffet et. al. 2014; Hohenstein & Moussauri 2017), regeneration, place making and community development (Janes 2009; Ehn et. al. eds. 2014; Graves et. al. 206), wellbeing (McCall 2010; Oakley & Ward 2018; Thomson & Chatterjee 2022), etc. These fields also include exploration of cultural policy or institutional practices related to more specific interventions in relation to specific health challenges (Morse et. al. 2022), climate change (Alexopoulos & Moussouri 2021), or the use of digital tools and methods (Geismar 2018; Holcombe-James 2022). For many academic researchers and policy makers focusing on cultural policy, the most important link between governmental policy and research is concerned with research into evidence determining the social and economic value of culture and the arts (Creig-Tyte & Stiven in Selwood ed. 2001; Bakhshi et. al. 2009; John 2012; Crossick & Kaszynska 2016). The studies into societal and economic value of culture and the arts are frequently conducted to justify existing public investment in culture and the arts, or to present a case for
increased public investment (Clark & Maeer 2008; University of Warwick 2015). At the times of pressure on public spending, such as after the UK general election in 2010, which ushered ‘the age of austerity’ in public finances, these studies have attained additional urgency and are welcome advocacy tools in defending public investment in culture and the arts.

However, cultural policy is not concerned with research functions within the sector, especially research functions focused on furthering of knowledge in an equivalent way to academic research, or any functions that are enabling provision of research infrastructures within the UK national cultural organisations.

At the same time, higher education and science policies are oriented towards evidencing and evaluating social and economic impacts, including their own comprehensive policy frameworks, designed to assess quality and impact of provision for research, teaching and knowledge exchange in universities, at the time of writing conducted by Research England via Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), and by Office for Students (OfS) through Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). One of the aims of these quality assessment exercises is to determine socio-economic impacts of these activities to justify public investment in universities (HEFCE 2014a,b&c, 2015; Reed 2016; Brook 2018). UK science policies are mostly linked to economic justifications, through the concepts such as the UK being ‘a global science and technology superpower’ (CST 2021: 1) and the significance of science and technology for the UK economic growth (BEIS 2016, 2017a&b). These policies underpin the UK government commitment for continuing investment in these areas. For example, we can see it in the Council for Science and Technology letter to Prime Minister in June 2021 -

Achieving and maintaining global leadership in science and innovation requires sustained increases in investment. Current plans to increase R&D expenditure to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 would only bring us in line with the current OECD average (and likely place us in the bottom half by 2030). Recognising the role played by the private sector, government should bring forward its 2.4% R&D investment target
within this parliament, have a clear plan to reach 3%, and should aim for this rate to remain in the top quartile of the OECD. (CST 2021: 3)

Being a science and technology superpower will generate new, valuable, and rewarding jobs and opportunities across the UK. (CST 2021: 7)

The ‘superpower’ policy framework for sciences does not include any links to the policy sphere of culture and the arts. In the previous policies, such as the Industrial Strategy from 2017, culture and the arts were occasionally included within science and research policy frameworks, mostly via creative industries, underpinning justification of investments in arts and humanities research (BEIS 2017: 203-4). This created the context for the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to promote research conducted within GLAM, which was useful to evidence economic and social impact of arts and humanities research. This includes the AHRC funding of research within the Independent Research Organisations (IROs), which include the majority of UK national cultural organisations. In this context, research conducted by the IROs was linked with the relevant economic outcomes. For example, AHRC celebrates a decade of investing in the IRO research by stating that ‘cultural organisations and practitioners contribute £27 billion to the UK economy each year and the cultural sector employs around 624,000 people’ (AHRC 2017: 3).

While both science and cultural policies frequently change, their focus on the issues of economic and social value within their own domains has remained consistent for many decades, but without any relevant links being made between scientific and cultural policies, meaning that we do not have a policy framework necessary to discuss research functions within cultural organisations, which tend to fall between these two policy domains. We do not know if these policy silos have had a negative impact on research and science within cultural organisations, especially within those cultural organisations where research and science are key components of the institutional purpose, activities, and structure. Where research functions take place alongside cultural functions, it means that these two spheres of institutional interest fall in between different government domains and departments, without any explicit public policy that would link them.
The absence of research functions from the DCMS policy frameworks has led to significant difficulties for institutions, especially when the UK cultural policies and funding were linked to specific priorities and targets that excluded research (Gee 1990a; Anderson 2005; Naggs 2022). Travers (2006) reports -

*There are conflicting demands on institutions, which must act as traditional centres of scholarship and curatorial expertise, but also as teaching institutions, mass entertainments and, increasingly moderators of scientific knowledge and agents for social change.*

(Travers 2006: 8)

This tension between different institutional functions in the UK national cultural organisations remains present under both Conservative and Labour governments in the post war period. Frequently, the long-term absence of adequate policies meant that the issues arising were not addressed until they were to become a full-blown crisis, sometimes leading to Parliamentary Inquiries, at times combined with a heated press and public debate (Tait 1990; Halstead 1990; Ellis 2000), and mostly leading to ad hoc, short-term solutions. We can see this sequence of events in the cases of Parliamentary Inquiries regarding the under-investments in heritage science (House of Lords 2006 & 2012), or the crisis in taxonomy and systematic biology research (House of Lords 1992, 2008 & 2009). We can even find a specific institutional crisis point, bringing into question survival of research and science capabilities within an institution, such as in the case of the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew (Defra 2010, House of Commons 2014, Richardson 2015 a&amp;b). This study intends to provide a deeper understanding of the issues arising over time and their impact on cultural institutions and their research functions.
1.3 Research within academic context

In the same way that the subject of this study falls in between different areas of public policy, it also falls between different academic disciplines, which is another reason why we know very little about research in cultural organisations. Museology and heritage studies have a strong research tradition in considering heritage and the state (Bennett 1995; Gascoigne 1998 & 2019), but these disciplines do not consider research functions within cultural organisations. Library and information studies tend to focus on research and policy issues that affect operational frameworks and development of library services (Brindley 2008, Reimer 2018, Baker & Ellis ed. 2021), but very rarely on the changing place of libraries within knowledge ecosystem, or within the UK governmental policy frameworks. Heritage science tends to deal with the application of science in preserving, conserving and understanding heritage objects (Dillon et. al. 2014; Grazia et al. 2020) and is predominantly interested in government policies underpinning preservation of heritage (Williams 2009a,b&c). History of science mainly considers the role of institutions in the scientific developments of the 18th and 19th centuries, and it focuses on examining specific collections and objects connected with the development of different scientific disciplines and methods (Pickstone 1994; Asma 2001; Bennett 2005, Cornish 2015), but it rarely considers the role of cultural institutions in relation to contemporary science (Funk 2018). Thus, the 20th and the 21st century issues related to research and science in cultural organisations are mostly overlooked, apart from a handful of publications (Sigfúsdóttir 2020, 2001a&b, 2022).

Understanding of research functions in cultural organisations is dependent on our understanding of their history, organisational structures and strategies, manifold functions that they fulfil and different audiences that they serve. Considering the iconic status of the UK national cultural organisations, there is relatively little written about their organisational history. The available histories have a strong preference for the periods up to the 20th century, focusing on the Enlightenment origins and the perceived collecting heydays, prominent directors and other significant staff, history of specific museum collections and buildings (Edwards 1870; Miller 1973; Harris 1998; Brown
As previously, there is very little that has been written about the 20th and the 21st century institutional history (Stearn 1981; Wilson 2002), and almost nothing on the modes of governance, institutional strategies and policies, decision-making processes, and the ways in which institutions are managed and funded (Wilson 1989, 2002). Many available works are general histories or guides written for general public and museum visitors. Some of these works are produced to mark a special occasion or an anniversary, and tend to provide key historical facts, describe the most important collections, and set up of departments, note significant events, and recollect amusing anecdotes and personalities of notable directors and curators (BM - Crook 1972, Miller 1973, Caygill 1992 & 2003; BL – Harris 1998, Leapman 2012). The exception is the British Library in its formative years, which resulted in an extensive literature covering all aspects of its complex formation (Barr 1983; Day 1988, 1994, 1995 & 1998). The available accounts dealing with the issues of policy and corporate organisational issues are almost always written by present or past senior staff of cultural organisations (Wilson 1989 & 2002, Urquhart 1990, Brindley 2002a & 2005, Anderson 2005). These texts usually contribute valuable information and perspectives, but we also need to consider their purpose and bias. Most frequently they include a strong element of advocacy for an institution or for a particular set of policies and actions (Brindley 2002 a&b, Wilson 1989), which inevitably affects the level of independence and criticality deployed in this type of literature.

While this study continues the tradition of being written by an institutional insider, it is attempting to critically examine one specific issue and different actors involved, aiming to add to our understanding of institutional history in relation to institutional research and science functions, framing this debate within a longer historical perspective, and in relation to institutional and governmental contexts.
1.4 Aims, objectives and research questions

This study aims to broaden our understanding of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, and how these functions have changed as a result of the changing relationship between these organisations and the state, with a focus on the post war period.

To achieve this aim, the study will answer the following research questions:

- What are the key characteristics of research in UK national cultural organisations? Have they changed over time and how?
- How have the interactions between national cultural organisations and the government changed over time and what is the impact of these changes on research functions?
- What was the impact of key changes in the UK science and cultural policies on research functions in national cultural organisations?
- What tensions and difficulties did national cultural organisation experience in relation to their research functions?
- How is research related to other institutional priorities such as exhibitions, audience growth, improvement of public access to collections, development of more extensive educational activities, enabling cultural diplomacy, etc.?

The objectives of this study are to:

- Examine key characteristics of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations and broaden our understanding of this research, its value, and key issues it is encountering.
- Describe historic context of the UK national cultural organisations within the machinery of government in the post-war period, so that we develop a better understanding of their position in relation to the government and state actors, and consequently the influence that the state has had on their development.
- Explore the effects of key cultural and science policies on research in cultural organisations.
• Using the case studies, investigate a range of situations when research functions in cultural organisations have been perceived as endangered and under pressure, to help us to better understand changes that are taking place and affecting research in cultural organisations, as well as the role played by the state and institutional actors in such situations.
1.5 Thesis contribution to the current state of knowledge

Research in cultural organisations is a subject on the fringe of public policy, and as such it does not have its own defined policy and theoretical framework. Information about this subject is scattered across many different sources, which are difficult to contextualise without understanding the broader cultural and science policy and institutional landscape. At the same time, the UK national cultural organisations tend to be cautious in discussing these issues, believing that this could affect their reputation, their relationship with government and other stakeholders, as well as their funding. These factors have contributed to this subject rarely being addressed through governmental and institutional lens. This study intends to do it for the first time.

As this is an interdisciplinary study, it adds to our understanding of cultural and research policy by contributing new findings to these fields, especially regarding the policy issues and fragmentation affecting research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. This is also a historical study, adding new findings to the history of the UK cultural organisations in the second half of the 20th and first decades of the 21st century. Historical elements also include a contribution to history of science by revealing the new aspects of historic developments of scientific publication landscape in relation to the British Library, and the correlation between taxonomy and systematic biology and the institutional changes in the Natural History Museum. The study also adds to our knowledge by showing that the study of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations benefits from an interdisciplinary approach, which will enable us to consider the larger picture and multiple dependencies affecting research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

This study provides the original contribution to knowledge in the following areas:

- Understanding of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, including key changes that have taken place in relation to in the second half of the 20th and the 21st century. While some studies have investigated key characteristics of research in
museums (Gunn & Prescott 1999), there has never been an attempt to provide a study that describes their long-term development.

- Understanding of how the UK government policy influences developments in the UK national cultural organisations, especially in relation to their changing research functions. This question has never been studied before in relation to the UK research or cultural policies, and this study is the first attempt to do this.

- Contribution to the institutional histories of the British Museum, the British Library, and the Natural History Museum by providing historic account that describes development of their research functions, especially during challenging times for these institutions. An important aspect of this contribution will be to shed light on how these organisations deal with governmental policy and actors, and how is their development being influenced by these interactions.
1.6 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this study has been designed to help us answer the research questions stated above. The study starts with three chapters that frame the study’s rationale, aims and objectives, theoretical framework, and methodology:

Chapter 1 – Introduction - The introductory chapter explains the need and purpose of this study, its aims, objectives and research questions, the purpose of this work, and its intended contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework – This chapter discusses theoretical frameworks relevant for this study, and especially how a combination of different frameworks is used to address the interdisciplinary nature of the research questions. This includes the use of historical institutionalism to help us understand changes within the UK national cultural organisations over time.

Chapter 3 – Methodology – This chapter discusses research design and methodology developed for this study. It considers how archival research, semi-structured interviews and case studies are combined to address the research questions. This chapter also includes the discussion regarding the interviewing methodology, data collection, analysis, and ethical issues related to this study. The chapter also includes a discussion regarding the author’s bias in relation to this study.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide a big picture and context of research in the UK national cultural organisations, including how cultural organisations fit within the UK machinery of government in the post-war period. These chapters aim to establish an overarching framework and structural understanding of the whole system that can help us to situate and examine further detail presented in the case studies.

Chapter 4 - Research in the UK national cultural organisations - is aiming to help us to understand the characteristics of research in cultural organisations today, including key changes that have taken place in the recent decades. The chapter examines the institutional research functions in the 21st century, with a focus on institutional, governance and policy issues. The
Chapter analyses data from the interviews conducted for this study and it provides us with a present-day analysis of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, before looking into the historic examples contained in the institutional case studies in the later chapters. This enables us to connect the past events with the current sectoral developments and directions of travel, enabling a longer-term outlook.

Chapter 5 – *UK National Cultural organisations within the machinery of government* – provides a historical overview of how cultural organisations relate to the UK government from 1945 to today. It provides a high-level map of links and relationships between the UK national cultural organisations and the government, as well as key changes in policy trends.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 cover three case studies - from the British Museum, the British Library, and the Natural History Museum. The case studies are exploring the changes to research functions that were taking place within specific institutional contexts. To this end, they identify and explore the points of crisis and change that shed light on the issues arising during the period covered in this study. The case studies are exploring four specific hypotheses, formed on the basis of evidence found in the published literature and the archival sources, and which are –

1) That institutional governance influences the way in which research functions develop in cultural organisations, especially due to the way in which institutions chose to react to the pressures created by governmental policy, funding, and other external and internal events.

2) That the on-going fragmentation of the UK cultural and science policies negatively affects research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, and that institutional strategies and behaviours in the UK national cultural organisations show a gradual move from research-led to culture-led policy and strategic drivers.

3) That during the 1990s, the pressures in policy and funding environment, combined with the need to reform both research and public functions of the UK national cultural organisations, created a series of critical junctures that led to significant changes in the way
in which research functions operate in the UK national cultural organisations.

4) That the broader advances within science and research, especially within relevant disciplinary fields, influence the change of research functions in the UK national cultural institutions, and that this change could lead to improvements and corresponding advancement in institutional research functions, but also to their decline and even disappearance.

These four hypotheses are inter-related, and each of three case studies examines the available evidence towards each of the hypotheses. They are supported by the contextual evidence set in Chapters 4 & 5.

Chapter 6 - The British Museum Scholarship Committee 1974-2001: institutional governance and research – this chapter follows the work of the British Museum Scholarship Committee from 1974 to 2001, helping us to understand how the Museum has sought to govern its research, key changes and issues taking place during this time, and especially how its research functions were affected and changed at the time when the Museum was experiencing significant financial difficulties during the 1990s. The case study explores the roles and interactions of governmental and institutional actors during this time, the role of the Museum’s trustees and senior staff in instigating and leading the change processes, and what this has meant for the Museum’s research functions.

Chapter 7 - The British Library and the UK research infrastructure – this chapter explores the policy drivers behind the formation of the British Library, its establishment as a key part of the UK national research infrastructure, and subsequent, gradual changes in these functions. The case study explores the changes in the UK policy and government priorities relevant for the British Library, including the significant changes within science publication landscape, and the effects that this has had on the British Library. The change is analysed through the prism of the changing organisational strategies published between 1985 and 2015. This enables us to see the organisational strategic shift since its foundation, gradually moving from predominantly science-led strategic and policy drivers to the more dominant culture-led strategic and policy drivers.
Chapter 8 - *Natural History Museum: cultural organisations and scientific progress* – explores how the Natural History Museum has changed its strategies and business models to respond to its own financial pressures during the 1990s, while also attempting to transform its scientific model from one based on curatorial research and taxonomy-based science to a model adjusted to recognise new scientific developments and the UK science policy underpinned by the concept of grand challenges. The case study explores these issues through the lens of the UK governmental inquiries into the crisis in taxonomy and systematic biology, but also in relation to the Museum-specific issues, such as the pressing need to modernise its research, while the same time modernising its public and educational functions.

Chapter 9 – *Conclusions and Recommendations* – discusses the study’s findings and conclusions in relation to the research questions explored. This chapter also proposes a set of policy recommendations that could remedy some of the issues arising.

Figure 1 shows how the study’s aims, objectives and research questions relate to the study’s structure.
Aim:
To broaden our understanding of research functions in large, national cultural organisations, and how these functions have changed as a result of the changing relationship between national cultural organisations and the state in the post-war period.

Research Questions:
- What are key characteristics of research in national cultural organisations?
- Have they changed over time and how?

Objective 1:
Examine key characteristics of research functions in cultural organisations and broaden our understanding of this research, its value and key issues it is encountering.

Objective 2:
Describe historic context of the national cultural organisations within the machinery of government in the post-war period.

Objective 3:
Explore the effects of key changes in cultural and science policies on research in cultural organisations.

Objective 4:
Investigate a range of situations when research functions in cultural organisations have been under pressure and the role played by the state and institutional actors in such situations.

Research Questions:
- What was the impact of key changes in the UK science and cultural policies on research functions in national cultural organisations?

Research Questions:
- What tensions and difficulties did national cultural organisation experience in relation to their research functions?
- How is research related to other institutional priorities such as exhibitions, audience growth, improvement of public access to collections, development of more extensive educational activities, enabling cultural diplomacy, etc.?

Chapter 4
Case study examples: 6, 7, 8

Chapter 5
Case study examples: 6, 7, 8

Chapter 5
Case study examples: 6, 7, 8
Chapter 9 – conclusions

Figure 1 - Research aim, questions, and objectives in relation to the thesis structure
2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Interdisciplinary approach

The Introduction emphasised the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the research questions of this study in order to explore different influences and pressures shaping research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. The current gaps in our knowledge of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations stem, in part, from the fragmentation of theoretical approaches and disciplinary fields applied to the study of GLAM (Sigfúsdottir 2020). This chapter explains how this study combines different theoretical and disciplinary approaches by deploying the elements of theoretical frameworks relevant to museology, museum studies and librarianship, as well as the frameworks relevant for the study of public policy in the fields of culture, research, and science. Also, to deepen our understanding of organisational change in the UK national cultural organisations, the study deploys historical institutionalism as a framework suitable to examine the role of institutions in evolving their research functions.

The multi-layered theoretical framework for this study, presented in this chapter, includes the following elements:

1) A discussion looking into GLAM institutions as epistemological platforms to help us frame our understanding of their role in creating and disseminating knowledge. (Section 2.2)

2) A discussion regarding the absence of GLAM research functions within cultural and science policy, especially in understanding social and economic value of GLAM institutions, and if this absence contributes to fragmentation of institutional functions. (Section 2.3)

3) A discussion regarding the value of deploying long-term historical and organisational analysis to expand our understanding of the UK national cultural organisations and their
research functions. This section introduces historical institutionalism as a framework that helps us explore research functions over time, especially in relation to any underlying institutional changes. (Section 2.4)
2.2 GLAM institutions as epistemological platforms

2.2.1 Museums, libraries, and archives reflecting our changing understanding of the world

In his study of the culture and evolution of natural history museums, Asma (2001) shows how the development of natural history museums was closely aligned to the development of scientific knowledge in the Western world. Thus, we find an example of Hunter’s exhibits from the 18th century, preserved in the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons, showing how Hunter’s unusual exhibits, such as a wet specimen of human stomach disintegrated by digestive acids, became more than the gruesome cabinets from previous times, instead becoming a reflection of Hunter’s experimental mindset and ‘a methodological study to the principles that underpinned all anatomical and physiological phenomena’ (Asma 2001: 58-59). Hunter’s specimen arrangements, which initially seemed irrational to the 18th century museum audiences, became clearer, when it was understood that the cases were organised according to physiological systems, thus creating a study of such systems (Asma 2001: 63). These displays reflected the new understanding of human body and natural world, and as such influenced Darwin’s and Owen’s thinking (Asma 2001: 66), whose work, in turn, changed the shape of the 19th century science and natural history museums. In a similar fashion, the 20th century natural history museums came to incorporate the rise of molecular biology and genetics (Bartholomew 1986; Carlins 2015; Schilthuizen et. al. 2015). The systems of preserving, displaying and interpreting collections in natural history museums have always evolved to reflect the changing scientific knowledge (Sunderland 2013).

And this is certainly not the case only in sciences. Ethnographic and archaeological collections, libraries, and archives, as well as collections of art, can also be understood as places of knowledge production and places articulating the state of human knowledge (Usherwood et. al. 2005; Gameson 2015). Their epistemic character becomes especially clear when we talk about libraries, which tend to equate their very existence with creation and
advancement of knowledge, as well as with the history of recording, preserving, and organising knowledge (Crawford ed. 2015; Ovenden 2021). Ovenden says –

In examining the history of libraries and the way their collections have evolved over time we are, in many ways, telling the story of the survival of knowledge itself. (Ovenden 2021: 9)

This epistemic character of museums, libraries, and archives, however, cannot be confined to scientific knowledge alone, or even to the realms of reason and logic, as they also embed other potent epistemological concepts such as memory, beauty, imagination, myth, and belief (Bud 1995; Stafford 1999; Bouquet & Porto 2005). Jordanova claims –

The ‘knowledge’ that museums facilitate has the quality of fantasy because it is only possible via an imaginative process.
(Jordanova 1989: 23)

Another part of their complex epistemic character is their direct link with the functions of state, including the legacies of colonialism, slavery and oppression, as well as the interlinked commercial and trade interest of the Western states (Gascoigne 1998, 2019). Image 1 below shows a contextual interpretation label from the Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum, which illustrates the link between the British Empire, slavery, and the scientific and collection developments of the time. The Enlightenment Gallery, at the time of writing, showed further similar interpretations explaining the links between the British Museum’s collections and the British empire, including highlighting Hans Sloan’s link with the slave trade.
The Age of Enlightenment was characterised by the rise of new sciences, faith in reason and expanding trade. It also witnessed the aggressive global expansion of European colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. This room’s displays reflect the close connection between Enlightenment and empire.

From the late sixteenth century onwards, Britain was one of the main participants in the transatlantic slave trade along with other European countries, transporting people against their will from West Africa to work on plantations in the Americas, then bringing goods and wealth back to Europe. This trade was at its height during the eighteenth century. Millions of Africans were enslaved, many working in brutal conditions on hugely profitable sugar plantations.

The slave trade was abolished by Parliament in 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 led to the end of slave ownership in most British colonies. Abolition was motivated by passionately disputed religious and moral arguments, but also by the declining profitability of slave-based labour and the increasing impact of slave rebellions, most notably the Haitian Revolution of 1791 and the 1831 Jamaica rebellion. British slave owners were compensated financially for the loss of what was regarded as their ‘property’.
The understanding of the UK national cultural organisations as complex epistemic platforms is used throughout this study, analysing what these institutions are telling us about the world through their collections and exhibits, but also through the ways in which they are managed and structured, how they form their strategies and their operational decisions, and how they relate to the state and governmental policies.

For example, when we enter the Hintze Hall of the Natural History Museum in London today, we are faced with a 25.2-meter blue whale skeleton, named Hope, suspended from the ceiling. This spectacular specimen is shown in a grand architectural setting, which combines its immense size with the effects of lighting and architecture to capture our attention and teach us something about nature. At the same time, the specimen is also eliciting our emotional response of awe and wonder.

Image 2 - Hope, the iconic blue whale at the Natural History Museum London, October 2021. Author’s own photograph

The label provides further scientific facts about this specimen and tells us about the danger of extinction that this species is facing. It also includes a narrative of ‘hope for the future of the natural world’.
The Museum’s website presents further information about this specimen, including the latest research using isotope modelling, a technique used to analyse chemical make-up of the whale’s mouth to tell us more about its movement and migration cycle (Trueman et. al. 2019; Davis 2018). But, in addition to science, this exhibit is also a symbolic cultural object, as well as an object that embodies the message about the Natural History Museum’s institutional role and relevance. At the unveiling of the blue whale in the refurbished Hintze Hall, Sir Michael Dixon, Director of the Natural History Museum at the time, said -

*This is a landmark moment for the Museum and for the millions of people from all over the world who visit us. The transformation of Hintze Hall represents a new era for us as a natural history museum for the future.*
We are living at a critical point in the history of the Earth. This generation's decisions will have an unprecedented impact on the world we live in.

It is within the grasp of humanity to shape a future that is sustainable, and now more than ever we want our galleries and exhibitions to inspire a love of the natural world, and our scientific expertise to inform solutions to the big, global challenges we face. (NHM 2017)

The story about Hope emerges in the Natural History Museum’s strategy A Planetary Urgency: Our Response (NHM 2019: 6). Just as Hunter wanted us to grasp his new experimental methods and scientific advancements of the 18th century through the arrangement of his exhibits (Asma 2001), the Natural History Museum wants us to grasp the importance of protecting biodiversity on Earth, while also emphasising the importance of its own organisational expertise and its collections in contributing to finding solutions to this unprecedented global challenge (NHM 2019). It is a highly-effective example of what O’Neill (2006) characterises as an emerging museum epistemology, which –

... aims to enlist people’s complex capacity to generate knowledge in order to ‘make meaning’ of the world. It recognizes the centrality of the specialist contributions of both object and visitor experts in realizing the potential of museums as places of significant experiences for a wide range of people. Knowledge about visitor behaviour, needs and interests, design for communication, ergonomics, and the impact of architectural spaces all need to be formally integrated into what counts as knowledge in the strategic management of the museum. (O’Neill 2006: 107)

O’Neill (2006: 114) also argues that -

... museums need to embrace a far broader conception of epistemology than has traditionally been the case, linking formal, informal, academic, experiential and intuitive knowledge of objects, ourselves, visitors and society into a coherent framework.

In a similar way, this study argues that research functions are only one
part of the overall epistemology of a cultural institution. In addition to research functions, these epistemologies include institutional relationship with external audiences, the way in which institutions disseminate knowledge, the ways in which institutions set their strategies, the ways in which are managed and the ways in which they run their operational functions.

2.2.2 Fragmented epistemologies

The epistemological position that O’Neill (2006) advocates is radically different from the long-standing, and still deeply embedded position, that juxtaposes research and other organisational functions as competing activities in GLAM institutions (Harrison 1994; Hall 1999; Anderson 2005). Within this traditional scenario, research functions are seen as a non-instrumental experience - ‘for their own sake’ – opposite to instrumentalist objectives which are frequently linked to social inclusion (O’Neill 2006: 96-97). O’Neill notes the failure in the institutions to follow the epistemological shift that occurred in many academic disciplines that embraced postmodern questioning of the basis of our knowledge (O’Neill 2006: 98). This shift led to the emergence of critical epistemologies of museum practices and purpose, which came to understand cultural organisations, especially museums, almost entirely as ideological spaces of control and power (Bennett 1995; Hetherington 2011).

The structuralist theories (Foucault 1979) removed museums from their original enlightenment-inspired epistemologies, where their role was to assemble, catalogue and organise the world so that humanity can be improved through reason and order (Anderson et. al. ed. 2003; MacGregor 2009; Delbourgo 2017). Instead, they were propelled into much more contested space, where museums are seen as instruments of power, seeking to manipulate and control our interaction with the world (Bennett 1995; Foucault & Miskowiec 1986). Museums become places where ‘experts supply cultural goods’ within the ‘supermarket-museum’ (Shanks & Tilley 1992: 91). The emergence of such critical epistemologies has defined museums as ‘simultaneously epistemic and governmental’ (Bennett 1995: 33), shedding light on the nature of narratives they construct, including their intended biases.
and the excluded points of view. Labelled by Vergo as ‘old museology’ (Vergo 1989: 3), the museological and heritage fields have subsequently provided a range of critical theoretical approaches deploying ‘post-colonial theory, post-structuralism, feminism, and institutional critique’, and seeing museums ‘through the conceptual lens of agency, authenticity, governmentality, inclusivity, gender and ethics’ (Sigfúsdóttir 2020: 196).

Thomas (2010: 6) points out a paradox in which anthropology as academic discipline is drifting away from museums as research resources or sites of analysis, while at the same time the public comes to know anthropology almost exclusively through the museum. The question arises if anthropology as academic discipline still informs anthropological collections and their interpretation. Thomas (2010:10) points out that this gap between academic research and museums means that we are losing an opportunity to understand ‘museum as method’ and to consider ‘how the histories of particular objects and of particular collections, and those of the institution as a whole, could become lenses through which to view much larger questions of cross-cultural and colonial history’. This gap means that we might be losing an opportunity to broaden disciplinary knowledge by better integration of theoretical approaches and material culture, but also an opportunity to disseminate much richer knowledge to general public.

Consequently, many theoretical advances of the 20th and 21st century academic research, especially when it comes to representation of different communities and to applying greater transparency and criticality to heritage practices, have not always been reflected in the practice of cultural organisations (Holo & Alvarez ed. 2009; Bennett et. al. 2016). This is especially the case for the UK national cultural organisations, where their organisational purposes and goals, as well as their practice, have not always evolved in line with the latest academic thinking (Gooding & Terras 2019; Naggs 2022). Sometimes, this might be justifiable – for example, following the short-term changes in academic thinking does not make a good foundation for long-term planning of acquisitions and preservation (Johns 1994; Jones 2017a). But this also means, for example, that we do not see many comprehensive examples of institutions following academic advances that would enable them to explore
their own colonial past, and engage in open and visible dialogue about their past and present collecting practices (Lonetree 2012; King 2016; Hicks 2020).

However, there are some signs that the real-life events such as the effects of the Black Lives Matter movement, the urgency of climate change, and the growing social, regional, and political polarisation in the UK, as well as different aspects of curatorial activism from within the institutions are starting to bring changes to the institutional thinking and practice (Reilly 2018; Bailey et al. 2021, National Trust 2021, Brown & Rajukumar 2021 & 2022). These changes, if continued, have a potential to bring institutional practice and thinking nearer to academic research, especially in relation to academic advances in the critical and sustainable heritage fields. For now, however, epistemology of research in cultural organisations remains fragmented in several ways - in relation to internal organisational understanding of their purpose that tend to fragment research and public functions, in relation to their audiences that are mostly kept away from the complexities of research concepts and processes, and in relation to academic research that is often moving in a different direction the GLAM practice. The examples of different types of fragmentation are further explored in Chapters 4 & 5 in relation to institutional processes and policy fragmentation (see pages 142 and 170).

All this tells us that there is a fundamental problem with the way in which research is understood and deployed within GLAM organisations. As we have seen, the existence of these issues related to research functions is widely acknowledged, yet they are very rarely addressed within contemporary museum studies. Sigfúsdóttir (2020: 197) articulates how the current situation means that museum research ‘remains a marginal topic within contemporary museology’, and explains the neglect of research functions as resulting from the conflict between different functions, seeing it in the context of the rise of neoliberal funding models and ideology in museums, where -

...time-consuming and resource-demanding research projects are inevitably less urgent than blockbuster exhibitions, entertainment and attractive public events. (Sigfúsdóttir 2020: 198).

This study fully agrees with Sigfúsdóttir’s (2020) analysis regarding the
neglect of research functions and their position within museum, including the marginal way in which this issue is treated within contemporary museology. Sigfúsdóttir (2020) also rightly points out the preference for public functions in GLAM institutions. This study, however, also argues that the root causes of this neglect stem from the fragmentation in policy and governmental landscape, as well as within institutions themselves.

2.2.3 ‘New museology’ and potential for integration of different GLAM functions

It is a view of this study that a more integrated epistemology of research in cultural organisations would enable institutions to bring closer together their public, educational, and research functions, and thus move away from accusations of elitism on one side and dumbing down on the other. Saumarez Smith (1989: 17) characterises the elitist tendency in museums as ‘a belief in anonymous authority’, which leads to institutional purveying of absolute truths. He further argues that, if the institutions were to embrace ‘the idea that objects are not neutral, but complex and subject to changing meaning, this would enable them to move away from linear and authoritarian knowledge models’ (Saumarez Smith 1989: 19). One benefit of embracing this position would be that we could understand exhibitions as a part of research process, and thus enrich museum research functions by including exhibition-based research methods such as a direct physical interaction with diverse materials, and new insights stemming from configurations and juxtapositions of objects (Herle 2013: 18). This would enable us to make a stronger correlation between exhibitions and research, thus providing much better understanding of ‘the distinct epistemological qualities of curatorial research as its output oscillates between the domains of science and culture’ (Sigfúsdóttir 2021: 2).

Sigfúsdóttir (2020) also advocates that –

… only by articulating the distinct epistemic qualities of the museum research process, including its methods and means of dissemination, are we able to carve out a space for research, not only within museology but also as practice in museums. And by doing so, its
relations to other core components of museum practice emerge. By identifying the role of the material, the temporal, the spatial and the sensuous in museum research practice, we are able to construct an epistemology of museum research and to contextualise it within other scientific fields. And only by understanding these qualities are we better equipped with tools to debate the very content of that knowledge. (Sigfúsdóttir 2020: 203-4)

Another benefit of more integrated epistemologies, that could bring together multiple perspectives and unify different functions in heritage institutions, would be an opportunity to move away from a sole focus on the Western concepts of research, which still tend to be applied to non-Western objects and narratives. Tuhiwai Smith (2012: 44-45) describes a new vision of a cultural archive that would not ‘embody a unitary system of knowledge’, where the understanding of the world is not ‘reduced to issues of measurement’, instead ‘containing multiple traditions of knowledge and ways of knowing’.

It is the view of this study that an epistemological approach integrating different GLAM functions could be used to achieve a better alignment between organisational strategy, objectives, exhibition spaces and narratives, educational activities, and research functions.
2.3 Cultural and research policy frameworks

2.3.1 Heritage institutions and the state

The relationship between museums and the state is an established part of academic enquiry in the field of heritage and museum studies, and we have already seen that this relationship is an essential part of the formative story of how institutions see their role as public bodies participating in knowledge creation and dissemination. Habermas considers the formation of public institutions, including museums, within a bourgeois public sphere that has been developed in close relationship with the state (Habermas 1989), functioning as a part of civil society as 'the corollary of a depersonalised state authority' (Habermas 1989: 19). Bennett (1995) provides a definition of museums as ideological institutions within a state sponsored exhibitionary complex –

\[
\text{...in which the museum, in providing a new setting for works of culture, also functioned as a technological environment which allowed cultural artefacts to be refashioned in ways that would facilitate their deployment for new purposes as parts of governmental programmes aimed at reshaping general norms of social behaviours. (Bennett 1995: 6)}
\]

The tradition of seeing museum as an instrumental tool of the state also includes the studies that perceive museums as places that exclude certain groups of people and create barriers to participation and access, which can be due to educational and social stratification (Notten et al. 2015), or lack of spatial equity (Brook 2016). Bennett explores many facets of this relationship: presenting museum as a didactic tool (Bennett 1995: 91); or as a differentiator of populations especially in privileging ‘men over women and white Europeans over black and colonised people’ (Bennett 1995: 193); or as a narrative machine of evolution and never-ending national progress (Bennett 1995: 146-153). These theoretical approaches firmly establish a context for perceiving museums as an integral part of the state apparatus.
In addition, we need to engage with the questions of finance and economics and how they inform institutional relationships with the government. To understand why these financial, political and policy relationships are important, we can look at the quote below from the Minutes of the Boards of Trustees of the British Museum from 26 October 2002, taken not long after Neil MacGregor has become the British Museum’s Director –

*The Director outlined his view of the Museum’s international value and potential. He said that the British Museum was the mother of world museums, and a repository of the collective human achievement. If anything, the universal purpose of the Museum squared with Government rhetoric more strongly today than it did in 1753. It made possible a journey through world cultures that no other building in the world could offer. Recognising this, the Museum should make it easy for visitors to return again and again throughout their lives in the pursuit of lifelong learning. Careful strategic planning and the investment of resources to secure funding for the future were what was required. (BM Trustees: 26 October 2002)*

We can see in this example how the epistemology of the world museum is aligned to the government priorities, especially those related to the UK international diplomacy and soft power, and how this, in turn, can inform strategic planning and funding requirements. Anderson (2007), another British Museum Director, asserts that public and research activities in museums were not in conflict with each other, unless it was for a prioritisation of work ‘when funding is not adequate to do everything’ (Anderson 2007:14). He is especially referring to the New Labour demands for museums to be agents of social change without committing sufficient funding that would enable them to achieve this goal. According to Anderson, the government applying pressure on museums to engage with these policies, without adequate resourcing, led to a situation in which research functions came under considerable pressure due to underfunding and a need to use the available resources elsewhere (Anderson 2007: 14).

These British Museum examples show us how museum purposes and epistemological definitions can be closely related to government policy and
funding, possibly more than to theoretical conceptualisations of knowledge.

2.3.2 Cultural policy and the value of culture

Crossick & Kaszynska (2016: 13) define the value of culture and the arts as ‘the worth attributed to activities involving these areas’. Due to the link with the advocacy for investment of public funds into culture, the most developed strand of research in cultural value is dedicated to economic value of culture and the arts, mostly linked to the methods which government uses to structure its funding and impact evaluations following the HM Treasury’s spending and evaluation methodologies (HM Treasury 2011).

In the Arts Council evidence review - The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society – Blackburn et al. (2014: 17) claim that the report developed in collaboration with the National Museums Directors Council (NMDC) and the Centre for Economics Business Research (CEBR) has provided ‘a clear and robust account of the contribution that the arts and culture make to the economy’, including ‘an analysis of the direct contribution of the arts and culture as measured by macroeconomic indicators like gross value added (GVA), employment and household incomes’, including the indirect contributions to the wider economy.

The CEBR report (CEBR 2013) – The contribution of the arts and culture to the national economy - includes the headline that the UK arts and culture industry generated an aggregate turnover of £12.4 billion in 2011, contributing an estimated £5.9 billion of gross value added to the UK economy in 2011 (CEBR 2013: 2). The value of this type of information is evident as the CEBR research for the Arts Council England has been repeated regularly. In 2019 the CEBR report states –

In the period 2015 to 2018, the nominal turnover, GVA, FTE employment and compensation generated by the arts and culture industry has risen by 19%, 8%, 3% and 9% respectively. (CEBR 2019: 7)
Going back to the 2013 report, we find that this study also shows the inadequacies of data in the museum sector, with the study acknowledging that it had to exclude museums from its macroeconomic impact analysis. It was discovered ‘late in the study’ that –

The ONS Annual Business Survey (ABS) only picks up the activities of 500 museums, in contrast to the 2,000 or so that exist in the UK. Not only that, but the ABS reports these 500 museums as making a negative contribution to national income, which was entirely inconsistent with existing industry data. (CEBR 2013: 10)

The study revealed that the museum’s sector data was inadequate for the purpose of cross-sectoral economic analysis. This is not surprising as keeping consistent data was never agreed on the sectoral level for culture and the arts in the UK, or for its different sub-sectors such as museums or libraries. Even today such data is not consistently collected, and it does not go much
further than reporting of the annual visitor numbers. Despite many decades of research into cultural audiences and the impact of the culture and the arts, the sector-level data and evidence of social and economic impact is lacking, meaning that it is impossible to deliver a sector wide view of its impact on economy and society. Selwood (2002a) pins down the responsibility onto the DCMS and its ‘failing to produce much in the way of evidence of social impact from the cultural sector’. This situation remained unchanged over the last two decades. DCMS has commissioned numerous reports on the subject, but it has never done much to implement adequate data collection and reporting mechanisms. For example, in 2010, in his report for the DCMS, O’Brien advises that –

\[\ldots\] economic valuation methods are currently under-used within the cultural sector and so require a strong lead from DCMS if it wishes to pursue the potential offered by this form of valuation. (O’Brien 2010: 48)

In 2017, Mendoza recommends that the Arts Council England (ACE), on behalf of DCMS and the sector, should –

Collect and disseminate key data on the sector and its health, including audience, workforce, income, indicators of resilience, and expenditure data, to inform policymaking and funding, and to provide benchmarking information to museums. (Mendoza 2017: 14)

While some data is being collected, ‘the museum sector is inconsistent in its collection, definitions, and use of it’, and ‘the data that does exist is not collated and presented as an accessible set’ (Mendoza 2017: 41).

The situation is the same for the UK libraries. The relevant data is not collected and available across the libraries sector. Roumpani et. al (2021), in their analysis of libraries data on the UK level, conclude that –

Data availability for UK public libraries is poor – the available data is fragmented and has multiple gaps. (Roumpani et. al. 2021: 289)

In addition to this absence of data, the UK lacks an integrated policy for either libraries or museums, or for the cultural sector overall. Selwood states –
‘The UK has no coherent museums policy’ (Selwood 2001: 22) – which is another long-standing issue that remains unchanged over many decades.

The same can be said for the UK libraries and archives. Sieghart (2014: 15) points to the absence of strategy for public libraries in England, recommending to DCMS that there should be a taskforce to provide more visibility of public libraries, so ‘that its potential benefits are understood at national and local level to inform policy development’. Meanwhile, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) shows that local authority cuts have led to a net loss of 127 public libraries in England, Wales, and Scotland in 2018 alone (CIPFA, 2018). Woodhouse and Zayed (2019) show, also based on the CIPFA figures, that since 2010-11 library net expenditure, including capital, has declined by 36 per cent in real terms, with the number of full-time staff in public libraries across England, Wales and Scotland reducing by 40% between 2005 and 2018 (Woodhouse & Zayed 2019: 11-12). With such deep cuts in the sector, it would be expected that the institutions start speaking in the language of their funders, in particular the HM Treasury, but the sectoral data collection and policy approaches remain fragmented.

UK academic inquiry into the value of culture and the arts has attempted to find new solutions to the ‘deeply contested relationships in cultural policy’ between economic and cultural value (Bakhshi et. al. 2015). The uneasy relationship between the concepts of economic and cultural value is often seen as one of the main reasons for insufficient data regarding impact and value of the sector. Deploying economic methodologies in culture and the arts is often seen as difficult, or as an inadequate representation of their overall value. Many researchers tried to develop the new ways for inclusion of economic methodologies within cultural policy while also recognising other types of measures including variety of qualitative approaches in an attempt to establish more relevant value metrics (Bakhshi et al. 2009, Bunting 2008, Crossick & Kaszynska 2016). There are also those who are advocating a radical move away from measuring instrumental values in culture, and exchanging target and evidence driven frameworks for much broader understanding of public good, which could be legitimised in other ways – for example, through public
Despite the inadequate data and contested approaches in this field, it is important to keep these issues in mind, as the overall issue of inadequate data, its reporting, and the lack of evidence-led policy across the sector, has had a negative impact on the sector, possibly most dramatically seen in the loss of the UK public libraries. Also, economic and social value, even in their inadequate state, remain important for the institutional strategies and prioritisation of activities as we will see in the subsequent chapters. The governmental spending cycles and their funding implications inform the institutional choices to much greater degree than theoretical discussions about the nature of heritage and knowledge production. It is, therefore, of significant concern for this study that research functions are very rarely, if ever, included in the institutional and governmental understanding of their value.

2.3.3 Separation of research functions from the value of cultural institutions

Crossick & Kaszynska’s (2016) work on the value of arts and culture delves into many previously neglected areas of cultural value. For example, they emphasise the value of individual experience of culture and the ability of arts and culture to help shape reflective individuals and engaged citizens (Crossick & Kaszynska 2016: 7). However, even this very comprehensive report, just like the previous literature describing different components of cultural value, excludes the sector’s capability to create knowledge through research.

For example, Bakhshi et al. (2015) are concerned specifically with the value of cultural institutions, providing the detailed case studies of economic value for the Natural History Museum and Tate Liverpool, using contingent and wellbeing valuation methods based on the surveys of users and non-users. These methods tend to deploy questions that seek to establish participants’ responses to hypothetical scenarios, such as individual’s willingness to pay for certain services or any perceived effects on their wellbeing in order to derive
value. The report notes that the Natural History Museum is a leading science research centre, employing around 300 scientists, who published 720 scientific papers in 2013/14 (Bakhshi et al. 2015: 24). However, the scientific aspect of the Museum is treated only as contextual information, which does not further inform the study’s valuation methodologies. The study leaves research functions out of its scope despite the report acknowledging them as an essential part of the Museum’s activity.

This study comes to the conclusion that ‘partaking in cultural activities and events at the NHM is also associated with significantly higher levels of wellbeing than other activities’ (Bakhshi et al. 2015: 59). The issue arising is that the omission of research functions in the study of value means that, should the Museum decide to relate this evaluation to their policy and their resource allocations, science could be left out as it does not appear to be creating value and wellbeing outcomes in the way that cultural activities and events are doing. While the broader governance and strategic outlook of the Natural History Museum is likely to prevent such simplistic conclusions, that might not be the case in other institutions. The ways in which the value of culture studies omit science and research when determining institutional cultural value could prove to be very detrimental in many institutions, especially if they are forced to prioritise across their activities due to financial pressures.

Bakshi et al. study (2015) is not alone in this respect. Research and science conducted in heritage organisations is not present at all in the discussions about cultural value in the UK national cultural organisations, including any recognition of the value of research functions of national importance in these organisations. This omission is of concern, and somewhat surprising, especially considering that, in purely financial terms, the linkages made between science and economic growth have served scientific community relatively well in recent times, returning much higher level of public investment than those achieved in culture and the arts (No.10 2018).

It is significant for this study that research does not feature as a value consideration for the government departments and other organisations that are primarily concerned with culture and the arts, such as DCMS and the Arts Council, or for the majority of academics and practitioners working in the field
of cultural policy. The absence of research is especially worrying considering a close correlation between definitions and methodologies that are used to determine value of culture with the governmental policy and funding (Creig-Tyte & Stiven 2001: 173-180). The absence of research functions from cultural policy frameworks could lead to significant difficulties for institutions in relation to their research functions, especially at times when the value of cultural activity is closely linked to specific priorities and targets. Robert Anderson, Director of the British Museum from 1992 to 2002, describes how this can impact research in museums as they are required to respond to different governmental priorities in the situation of funding cuts -

*It would be difficult for nationally funded museums not to respond positively, given the threat of funding squeezes which can, and are, imposed by government. Under these circumstances, museum boards of trustees are scarcely likely to declare that research was going to be their number one priority, given the implied threat.*

*(Anderson 2005: 300)*

The relationship between the ways in which we measure the value of cultural organisations, cultural policy, and funding, as well as the institutional reactions to the pressures created through these processes are an integral part of this study, especially in considering how the exclusion of research functions from cultural policy frameworks could have a negative effect on research functions in cultural organisation.
2.4 Historical narratives and institutional change

2.4.1 Turbulent 1990s: time of rapid institutional change

One of the most significant periods of vigorous discussion about research in cultural organisations took place during the 1990s, when the governmental policies focusing on diversifying income of cultural institutions and increasing their social impacts, were perceived by many as a threat to their traditional science and research missions (Lucas et. al. 1990). While this period covers two different administrations, Conservative and Labour, as well as multiple changes in policy directions in both culture and science, the overall financial and policy pressure remained present throughout this period. This is further explored in the case studies in Chapters 6 and 8. The institutional pressures in this period were a result of multiple factors – funding crisis after a long period of underfunding, but also a need to modernise nearly every aspect of the UK national cultural organisations, including buildings, public offer, management, operational systems, and workforce skills (Zan 2015). For many institutions, the need for extensive modernisation, especially of their public facing facilities and offer, but also the old-fashioned curatorial practices and scholarship, created a need for complex organisational change (Bodmer 1990; Cossons 1991). Envisioning and implementing such changes in the organisations that were not used to change, in financially challenging circumstances, and often with unsuitable governance structures, created a perfect storm in many institutions, and across the UK cultural sector more broadly (Edwards, unpublished 1996; Zan 2015). The nature of these changes is explored in detail in the case studies in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

A striking record from this period is a transcript of an international museum conference held in London on 2 October 1990 at the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) (Lucas et al. ed. 1990). At this conference, several directors of national institutions spoke about research in their own institution, and about the state of research in museums more generally. Even in the transcript form, this event shows great deal of tension in the sector, with John White, the conference Chair, making
an introductory plea against bickering and rekindling of old animosities (Lucas et al. ed. 1990: 345). With the background of extensive staff cuts in several institutions, there is an air of discontent, with deeply held views either for the need for radical modernisation and commercialisation, or that these modernising processes are likely to cause lasting damage to individual institutions and the sector. The tension between different museum functions is at the centre of this discussion. Julian Spalding, Director of the Glasgow Museum, insists that ‘scholarship is under threat in our museums today’ (Lucas et al. ed. 1990: 386). Neil MacGregor, Director of the National Gallery at the time, sees research as essential, but alongside other organisational functions, and not conducted for its own sake. Using as his example an exhibition of the 14th century Italian paintings, MacGregor quotes from the National Gallery’s Annual Report –

*The Exhibition demonstrated incontrovertibly that scholarship and public access are not, as has sometimes been asserted, alternatives between which museums and galleries must choose. Rather it is scholarship which adds a new dimension to accessibility. In consequence, we believe it is essential that scholarship remain a major priority if we are to serve the ever larger public we expect in the next few years.* (MacGregor 1990: 361-2)

For MacGregor, a sense of public value is a key for the future of research in museums and galleries –

*Our research has to be accountable to the public, and I think it is a part of a greater purpose. Our purpose in our scholarship must be better to conserve the collections, and, above all, better to allow the public to enjoy and to understand.* (MacGregor 1990: 363)

We are told that Neil Cossons, Director of the Science Museum, and Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, did not want their contribution included in the journal of conference proceedings (Lucas et al. ed. 1990: 341), indicating that the bickering did take place after all. Other recorded comments, such as this one from Julian Spalding, give us further information as to some areas of disagreement -
It is quite wrong, I think, for the current Director of the Science Museum, the V&A and the Natural History Museum to advocate a rosy future for research while at the same time welcoming proportional cutbacks in staff. (Lucas et al. ed. 1990: 386-387)

This conference is a snapshot from the time of controversial restructures and staff cuts at the Natural History Museum, V&A and the Science Museum, which was accompanied by the increased focus on modernisation and commercialisation of their public offer, changes in the nature of curatorial work, reductions in the numbers of curatorial posts, and the increased need to demonstrate public value of cultural organisations (Griffin 1990a&b, MacGregor 1990; Gee 1990a&b).

Lifting the Veil report (Gunn and Prescott 1999) also engaged with research functions as a key area of museum activity at this time, shows a cross-sector concern that research functions are declining under financial and policy pressure. Another international conference, held in Stockholm in 2007, and arranged by the Nationalmuseum, Nobel Museum, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, gives examples of museum research and proclaims that the future of museums depends on their capability to continue to exist as research institutions, while also discussing the perceived threats, which are identified as coming from the changes in government policies or from the encroachment of managerial culture (Anderson 2007: 11-24). These views are confirmed by other researchers working within cultural organisations, including discussion about the declining state of archaeology at the British Museum (Gaimster 1999), the uncertain future of research in natural history museums (Winker 2004), and the crisis of ethnographic museums (Feest 1993).

These perspectives, mostly generated by museum professionals or by cultural organisations themselves, are significant for research questions in this study, providing key evidence that research is seen as important by these organisations, but also that it is often seen as an area of activity that was experiencing difficulties, and that these difficulties were linked to governmental policy and insufficient level of funding. However, there are also other factors at play, such as the need to modernise institutions to ensure continuing public
interest and societal relevance of these institutions, and which mainly meant the improvements of public-facing functions such as exhibition programming, interpretation, design and marketing.

To study this complex environment, it is essential to understand how the UK national cultural organisations change, especially under financial pressure. This is not possible to do using the museology or heritage theoretical frameworks, or the frameworks of cultural and research policy. Therefore, we need to add in another set of research tools and a theoretical framework that will enable us to better understand how institutions change in regard to their policies and practice. This is the reason why the theoretical framework for this study also includes historical institutionalism, which can help us to understand institutional context of changes relevant for research functions over time.

2.4.2 Historical institutionalism as a framework to understand organisational change and complexity

This study uses historical institutionalism as a part of its multi-layered theoretical framework and methodology, alongside epistemic museology and cultural and science policy frameworks, discussed earlier in this Chapter. Historical institutionalism is primarily deployed in the case studies, while looking at the detail of organisational changes that took place at the British Library, British Museum and Natural History Museum.

Historical institutionalism enables us to enhance our ‘understanding of the origins, evolution, and consequences of humanly created institutions across time and place’ (Fioretos et al. 2016: 2). Pierson states that -

*Historical institutionalism analysis is based on a few key claims: that political processes can best be understood if they are studied over time; that structural constraints on individual actions, especially those emanating from government, are important sources of political behaviour; and that the detailed investigation of carefully chosen, comparatively informed case studies is a powerful tool for uncovering the sources of political change.* (Pierson 1993: 596)
Historical institutionalists argue that ‘institutions are often results of large-scale and long-term processes that have little to do with modern political issues’ (Amenta 2012: 47) and that ‘over time institutions also become potential causes behind preferences and patterns of political contestation’ (Fioretos et al. 2016:7). The above framework fits well with the characteristics of the UK national cultural organisation, whose distinctive origins, identities, and ways of working precede the contemporary UK policy processes, thus being strong candidates for the types of institutions whose historical development and origins have influenced political power, policy, and strategies in the relevant policy domains.

In relation to cultural organisations, for example, Jensen (2019) uses historical institutionalism to analyse Danish museum legislation and related discussions from 1958 to the present day to describe the development of the museum field in Denmark. He identifies three phases of professionalisation in the sector, including (1) the introduction of Danish museum legislation in 1958; (2) restructuring through the Museum Act of 1976; and (3) the introduction of a professional governmental supervision in 2001 (Jensen 2019: 111). At each of these points Jensen identifies critical junctures stemming from - (1) the resourcing instabilities in the 1950s and 60s; (2) rapid growth in political power of museum professionals during the 1970s and 80s; and (3) the power struggle between museum professionals and the Ministry of Culture leading to administrative and managerial professionalisation during the 1990s and 2000s (Jensen 2019: 111). In a similar way as in this study, Jensen (2019) looks at the legislative and policy changes, and the perception of public value in relation to the changing museum functions, or, in his terminology, legislatively defined ‘pillars or functions of museum work, which include collection, registration, preservation, research and mediation (Jensen 2019: 107). In a similar way to this study, Jensen is providing this analysis at the time of potential new critical juncture in 2017, seeking to influence the contemporary debate, analysing historical developments at the point of significant change in order to inform the future Danish museum legislation.

The contemporary proposals in Denmark favour the state subsidy for museums based on performance, as well as reduction of the number of ‘pillars’
to only preservation and mediation (Jensen 2019: 112). This would mean that, just as in the UK system, research would lose its link with the museum policy and funding, and it would be removed from Danish legislative framework. The deployment of historical institutionalism enables Jensen to take a long view of the system development, shining a spotlight on the growing administrative and managerial control and the loss of importance of professional and academic competencies within the Danish museum system.

While not all historical institutionalists deploy historical methods, they seek to ‘gain extensive knowledge of their cases by mastering the relevant historiography’, with some scholars ‘relying mainly on primary sources to appraise and develop arguments’ (Amenta 2012: 52). This study is constructing a picture of complex processes, based on the unfolding events over long period of time and across a range of interlinked institutions. It is using primary sources and relying on the interpretation of historic documents. This represents a standard historical institutionalist method that uses detailed data derived from primary sources to create theoretical argument underpinned by historical causation to identify causes and critical junctures that determine the path chosen (Amenta 2012: 51).

Critical junctures are defined as initial markers of path-dependent processes (Fioretos et al. 2016: 9), meaning that they represent an open moment when change is possible, resulting in the creation of institutions with self-reinforcing mechanisms and processes (Amenta 2012: 50-51). In this way ‘policies provide incentives that encourage individuals to act in ways that lock in a particular path of policy development’ (Pierson 1993: 606). But also, institutions can act as political actors that may purposefully sequence reforms in order to secure desired outcomes (Fioretos et al. 2016: 9).

Three case studies chosen for this study present such critical junctures, including:

The British Museum changing and formalising new types of research processes and governance as an answer to financial instability (See Chapter 6, page 204).
• The British Library moving away from its foundational science-driven policy frameworks towards more culture-driven purposes due to (1) the changing scientific publishing environment and (2) gradual institutional policy alignment with DCMS policy frameworks (See Chapter 7, page 255).

• The Natural History Museum moving away from predominantly taxonomy-orientated science towards the grand challenges driven science approaches (See Chapter 8, page 314).

All these events take place in the mid to late 1990s, indicating the likelihood of an overarching critical juncture in the sector and a point of change that was significant for the broader UK national cultural sector. In this study historical institutionalism is of special relevance for the case studies in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, which are developed to show institutional change processes over several decades including the critical junctures related to their research functions taking place during the 1990s.
2.5 Summary

This section presents three key elements of theoretical framework relevant for this study -

1) The study shows that to address the issue of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, it is necessary to consider epistemology of cultural institutions, recognising them as unique epistemological platforms that create and disseminate knowledge, through their collections, but also through their structures and their ways of working. The study also recognises the fragmentation of public and research functions in the institutional epistemological models.

2) This study explores how the UK national cultural organisations identity sits within the governmental sphere, and how government policies and priorities influence their choices. It especially identifies the absence of research functions from the frameworks measuring value of culture, which creates problems in placing research functions within policy frameworks for the UK cultural organisations. This study seeks to reintroduce research functions within our understanding of economic and social value of GLAM institutions.

3) Last, but not the least, this study introduces historical institutionalism as a framework that can deepen our understanding of change in the UK national cultural organisations over time, including exploring different drivers that have led to the change in their research functions.

The UK national cultural organisations are complex structures that consist of unique, and seldom studied, internal systems and cultures. The combination of these frameworks will provide a holistic framework to analyse specific instances of change related to research functions within these complex environments, and also to investigate the broader issues related to their role in creating and disseminating knowledge.
3 Methodology

3.1 Research Scope

Research design and methodology for this study necessitated a set of initial decisions regarding its scope, especially in terms of geographic coverage, the types of cultural organisations that the study is to investigate, and its timeframe. It was necessary to make choices that would enable this research to be achievable, while also allowing for a scope that is broad enough to lead to significant findings.

The geographic scope of this study is focused on England, and it is most relevant for the DCMS sponsored museums, galleries, archives, and the British Library, which form a specifically defined group of the UK national institutions based in England and directly funded by the DCMS (DCMS 2022). It is worth noting that the institutions chosen for the case studies, just as many others in this group, regard themselves as UK-wide national institutions. The British Library and the British Museum are described as being British in their name, and their aims and objectives specify a UK-wide remit. For example, in its 2015 strategy Living Knowledge, the British Library commits to improving ‘access to knowledge and cultural opportunities across the whole of the UK’ (BL 2015: 1). The Natural History Museum also identifies its objectives in relation to the UK-wide audiences and the success of UK science (NHM 2019: 18). However, it is important to point out that the devolved national governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland form policies for their national institutions. While this seems inconsistent, it is not unusual to find such situations in other UK sectors. For example, in relation to the UK higher education institutions, teaching and learning funding and policy is devolved across UK nations, while research and science are not, meaning that the UK university functions are informed by both the UK-wide policies and by a set of devolved policies. This is a significant point for this study because the study deals with research functions and, as mentioned, the UK research and science policy and funding were operating on the UK level for the whole period covered by this study. Also, this study, in part, covers a period of time prior to the current
devolution policies, so in that respect it often refers to the UK-wide policy landscape that existed prior to the Scotland Act, the Government of Wales, and the Northern Ireland Act of 1998.

The institutions that this study focuses on are London-based institutions, even though the British Library also operates in Boston Spa in Yorkshire, and the Natural History Museum in Tring in Hertfordshire, and they are both in the process of developing other sites outside London, as is the British Museum and many other organisations in this group (Oliver 2020; Beecham 2021, University of Reading 2017 & 2022). It is also significant that these institutions are the best resourced and largest UK cultural organisations, with the most developed research functions and the largest number of research-active staff (BL 2018a, 2019a, 2022; NHM 1956, 1962, 2013a; BM 1994 & 1997). Many other institutions that this study considers also belong to the same group of large, London-based institutions, such as the V&A, Science Museum Group, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, National Gallery etc. The study also considers examples relevant to other UK large heritage organisations with research functions, such as Historic England. The choice to focus on large institutions that see their remit as UK wide, as well as global, does not mean that research functions do not exist in GLAM institutions of all sizes across the country. However, the intent of this study was to research the issues occurring in the places with the most intensive research and the most extensive dealings with the UK government.

While the issues discussed also apply to other parts of the world, where we can find comparable national cultural institutions in size, remit and organisational set up, especially in the United States and in many countries across the European Union, it would be difficult to analyse more than one national policy system within the confines of a single study. However, the comparisons can be made in relation to key issues that take place, such as changes in the way science is conducted, the ways in which audience expectations have changed worldwide, or the changes in relevant external environments such as higher education. This research started while the UK was still part of the European Union, and, at the time of finalising it, the adjustments are still taking place following the UK exit from the European
Union (BEIS 2020: 7, 42-43). Alongside Brexit, there are the new issues arising for GLAM institutions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Neither Brexit, nor the Covid-19 pandemic, are central considerations for this study, but the issue of Brexit was raised in the interviews as a source of future uncertainty by several interviewees (Interviews G1.01; G1.02).

While it is an intention of this research to look at the entire period from the end of the World War II until today, this study is not attempting to provide an equal level of detail across the whole period, but it focuses on the instances where we can see evidence pointing to the changes that can help us ‘identify both the critical juncture and the set of causes that determined the path chosen’ (Amenta 2012: 51). The evidence of this study points that such critical juncture existed in the last decade of the 20th century, and, therefore, this study is focusing on this period, while also commenting on the significance and continuation of change processes taking place across the whole post-war period. The transformative episodes from this period include the changes at the Natural History Museum in the early 1990s, set in motion by the Museum Corporate Plan 1990-1995 (NHM DF941/4 archival), and the change in the British Museum’s strategic frameworks at the end of the 1990s, taking place due to financial pressures that the organisation was experiencing at the time (Edwards unpublished 1996; BM Scholarship & BM Keepers archival).
3.2 Research design

Sutton & Straw (1995: 372-374) discuss the frequent tension that occurs in social science studies between creation of theory and collection of data, with some authors tending to mistake data or reporting of empirical results for theory, but also recognising that, on the other side of this equation, manuscripts can be depleted of value if authors are asked to drop much of the description of characters and events to make room for greater theoretical developments, thus losing value of data and opportunity to build new theories over time (Sutton and Straw 1995: 383). This study is mindful of this need to balance theoretical approaches and the focus on data. Understanding of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations required new data to be collected and built into a detailed narrative, enabling us to understand specific policy context, different actors involved, and their networks. In methodological terms, the main approach taken was to find, connect, and interpret available historic primary sources, and supplement them with additional data, collected in the form of structured interviews with the professionals involved with research in cultural organisations. This methodology is rooted in historical methods, with archival research and oral history as its predominant methods. However, the analysis and interpretation of this historic data include social science methods and concepts, especially in analysing social, political, and institutional actors, the characteristics and dependencies in their relationships and networks, as well as economic and political drivers that influence these relationships and, ultimately, the way in which they influence institutional changes. Gunn & Faire (2012: 2) point out that historians have tended to conventionally borrow their methods from social sciences. This means finding a way to reconcile the use of unique historical events with a need to draw more general observations about the nature of institutions and the way in which they change. This study aims to exploit the ability of social science, via historical institutionalism, to find patterns that can be fashioned into broader findings.

Schensul (2012: 70) defines ‘qualitative research as using multiple approaches to data collection that are designed to help the researcher learn
about and obtain the perspectives, meanings, and understandings of people who live and work in specific social settings’. To explore a range of individual and organisational behaviours and processes related to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, this study examines relevant primary sources, collects new data through the interviews with individuals involved in these processes, and constructs case studies that can shed light on detailed changes and developments.

The processes deployed can be shown as five distinctive phases, exploring key issues from different angles, and in this way allowing us to gradually identify and address data gaps, and build our understanding of this subject. Figure 2 below shows the five phases, starting with the initial establishment of scope by building up understanding of the current literature and most relevant theoretical frameworks in Phase 1, the collection of data from primary sources in Phase 2 and the interviews in Phase 3. The data from Phases 2 & 3 is used to select and develop the case studies in Phase 4. Phase 5 includes data analysis and validation.

![Methodology approach](image)
While Figure 2 shows the five phases as consecutive, the actual process involved continuous feedback loops between different elements, which is typical for the iterative, grounded theory approach deployed by this study (Thornberg & Charmaz 2012: 41). The initial literature review revealed the issues that were already known (e.g., that there is a sense of crisis in relation to research functions in GLAM), but, also, that there are significant data gaps (e.g., lack of information on how is this crisis manifesting itself in different institutions and what are its causes). The investigation of primary sources was necessary to fill in some of these gaps, and it was also used to design interview process and to identify potential case studies. The interviews, in their turn, revealed further primary sources, which were known to the interviewees. The case studies development informed the interview process, influencing the interviewee selection, in order to identify potential interviewees who would be able to expand on or verify events presented in the case studies. The new data necessitated to revisit the initial theoretical framework and how the different elements fit together. Also, the role of institutions and their own policy processes and cultures was emerging as significant, which indicated that there is a need to combine study of policy processes with historical institutionalism approaches that can capture change processes within the institutions themselves.

Other significant issues were the lack of current literature that would provide sufficient detail about key characteristics of research functions in cultural organisations, and a lack of an overview of how the UK national cultural organisations fit with the machinery of government. This meant that it was necessary to construct this information as a contextual basis for this study, before considering the process of change. Chapter 5 of this study explores the nature of relationships between the UK national cultural organisations and government, which is a necessary foundation for this work.

These diverse elements are integrated into a single narrative through data analysis and interpretation, which builds up in layers to increase our overall understanding of research in cultural organisations.
3.3 Primary Sources

Amenta (2012: 52-53) describes the tendency of historical institutionalist analysis to use primary and secondary sources to ‘array in one place a wealth of information scattered among different works, drawing a more analytically coherent picture of what is to be explained’. In a similar fashion this study assembles a range of primary source materials, relevant to research functions in cultural organisations. This includes a range of documents produced by the UK Parliament, different government departments and cultural organisations themselves. These primary sources are especially important because of the scarcity of information regarding research functions in the UK national cultural organisations in the secondary literature.

While this subject is at the fringes of national cultural and research policy making, it occasionally features in the official Parliamentary discussion in both the Lords and the Commons. Periodically, there are Parliamentary Inquiries related to specific research areas in the UK national cultural organisations such as taxonomy and systematic biology or heritage science, or to different aspects of preservation of heritage, or to information related policies, such as copyright or legal deposit legislation, in the case of the British Library (House of Lords 1992, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012; House of Commons 2002, 2007c, 2014a, 2015a&b). At certain times, we find that these issues achieve some prominence, unfortunately mostly at the time of crisis at different national institutions (Halstead 1990a&b; Ellis 2000; Richards 2015a&b).

Policy documents produced by government departments dealing with cultural issues, such as Green and White Papers covering development and changes in cultural policy, usually do not deal with research issues (e.g., DNH 1996, DCMS 2000 & 2016b), but these documents provide important context for understanding governmental expectations, policy drivers and funding decisions at the time when these departments are overseeing the UK national cultural organisations. In addition to the central government departments, this study required an examination of relevant arms-length bodies, which have been operating in both research and cultural policy landscape at different times. This includes arms-length bodies such as the Museum, Libraries and
Archives Council (MLA), the Arts Council, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). It has been equally important to explore the primary source documents from the parts of government and arms-length bodies dealing with research and science, such as the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and its predecessor departments, as well as the Research Councils and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), later including different constituent bodies of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). While these arms-length bodies do not have a direct responsibility for heritage and culture, they often fund research in the UK national cultural organisations and produce policies that inform their research.

In addition to the government-related primary sources, this research also investigated institutional archival sources, looking for the evidence of:

- Organisational strategies and policies that are specific to research and how research is positioned in the institutions.
- Governance arrangements related to research, including any specific financial and reporting considerations.
- Deployment of resources such as staffing and funding in relation to research priorities.
- Records of interactions with Government that are related to research.
- Approaches to interaction with universities, research policy bodies and research funders.

The examination of archival materials available at the British Library, the Natural History Museum and the British Museum reveals that, in all three, there are corporate committees or other formal mechanisms with organisational responsibility for research. These structures changed over time, but, in some cases, remained active over many years, including keeping detailed records of their discussions and actions. The Boards of Trustees in all three organisations were addressing research subjects on a regular basis, and these organisations produced numerous research strategies and policies, as well as occasional reports and reviews of their research functions.

One of the objectives of this study is to look at research functions over
longer period to enable us to study relevant change processes. This was possible due to the existence and availability of relevant institutional and governmental documentation. Of particular relevance for this study were three sets of continuous records – the Scholarship Committee records at the British Museum covering the period between 1974 and 2001 (see page 212); the British Library strategic documentation covering the period from 1985 to 2015 (see page 295); and a range of governmental and institutional policy documentation related to taxonomy and systematic biology, including in relation to the Natural History Museum from 1976 to 2015 (see page 326). In all these cases all the identified information was described and included in the analysis for this study. In the future it is likely that it will be possible to enrich our knowledge as further archival information becomes available. For example, the British Library has acquired a new personal archive of Donald Urquhart in 2023, at the time this study was reaching its completion, and which will be a valuable source for further examining the formation and early years of the British Library. The National Archives are also likely to make available further governmental information from this period.

The availability of relevant documentation in the institutional archives related to this subject, and the broader subjects of organisational governance and strategy, is relatively good for the 20th century, but often inadequate for the more recent 21st century events. This could be the case because the documents are still unavailable in the archives for the most recent events, but also due to the ways in which the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the availability of corporate documents on the Internet affected the way in which corporate records are kept. The official records for the 21st century tend to be shorter and more generic in comparison to those of the 20th century across all three institutions studied, indicating that the institutions implemented much tighter control over their corporate information. The British Museum and the British Library corporate records are not catalogued, meaning that it was necessary to identify relevant resources from other records or in consultation with librarians and archivists. The Natural History Museum provides more catalogued records for this period.

The primary sources used can be described as official, organisational
sources, and as such they include a range of biases, as they represent the voices of those who were in power. These sources were often created as a part of official decision-making processes and were structured in accordance with different management practices deployed in different institutions at the time. They constitute the authorised, official record of these institutions, or of the governmental policy processes. Consequently, they represent only a narrow range of voices, even when they show us that different actors disagreed.

Moore et al. (2017: 156-7) in examining archival research conclude -

*Even when working with tangible sources such as transcripts of oral interviews or written documents, we are dealing with mere traces of the complex and visceral ways that such things were lived, told or written, and subsequently recorded in the researcher’s notes or databases, transcriptions or digital photographs. And yet this acknowledgement of the impossibility of reaching ‘the real’, the aporias of representation and communication, and the fleeting meanings of language-in-use, does not reduce the validity of human and social sciences research generally, or archival research specifically. (Moore et al. 2017: 156-7)*

The issues of complexity and capturing less tangible information were relevant issues for this study in regard to both primary sources and interviews for this study. The tangible documentation and interviews did not always capture all nuances of the subject matter. The official documentation was written to present us with an accepted record, which was inevitably tailored for its purpose, and most likely, excluding many critical, inconvenient, or dissenting voices. In addition, it is important to bear in mind the context of these sources and the biases that are integral to their creation and selection. The official records represent the demographic of those who were in power in the institutions at the time, which means the predominantly white and male cultural establishment of the 20th century. In the national sector this includes very small number of people, who made it to the leadership positions. Even when in power, the female voices and contributions are sometimes seen as problematic or as being somehow ‘illegitimate’ in this context, which was
especially the case in the British Museum case study in relation to the role played by Suzanna Taverne (see Section 6.6.4, page 240). The considerations of race, ethnicity and non-binary sexualities were not present in the primary sources. This means that they were also under-represented or even completely absent in organisational management and change processes described in this study.

In addition to archival documents, several documents were provided by the interviewees and other staff of the British Library, the Natural History Museum, and the British Museum. They are noted and referenced as ‘unpublished’ primary sources. The most significant of these documents in the Edwards Review and the British Museum’s research strategies, which were obtained from the British Museum staff, rather than through the Museum archive (Edwards unpublished 1996; Hill unpublished 2010 & 2016). Also, the full set of the British Library strategies and the contextual information was obtained through a staff member who worked in these areas rather than through the organisational archive, which was a simpler way to access them and had an additional benefit of documents being contextualised by a staff member involved with their creation (Clarke unpublished 2012a&b, 2002). The full list of all primary sources is provided in Section 10 (page 393) of this study.
3.4 Interviews

3.4.1 Interview aims and objectives

The interview process for this study was designed to collect contemporary information regarding research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, including the current perspectives of curatorial and other research-active staff, managers, policy makers and funders of research. The intent was to use this data to help us understand a selection of key events from mid 20th century to today, including any emerging trends. The interview data is also intended to deepen our understanding of three institutions used for historic case studies, the British Library, the British Museum, and the Natural History Museum, with the majority of interviewees coming from these three institutions. However, the interviews also include perspectives from other national institutions, key funders and policy making organisations.

The purpose of the interviews, which were conducted as a part of this research, is to provide new data that can deepen and contextualise information gathered from primary sources, which are often lacking detail, and are fragmented. The written sources are very rarely able to tell us about the processes behind policy making, including about complex personal and institutional dynamics and politics that influence these processes. The interviews provide much richer detail, including personal experiences of research in cultural organisations and a range of unrecorded motivations and drivers behind the change processes.

Equally, the interviews enabled the data collection and analysis regarding the current research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. As there are no contemporary sources of such data, it would be impossible to evaluate significance of past events if we did not develop some knowledge of how this landscape looks like, and what are its key characteristics.
3.4.2 Interview selection criteria

The selection criteria for interview participants for this study were created to include four different groups of interviewees. The four groups are -

Group 1 (G1) – Curatorial, scientific and other research-active staff, currently in post at the British Museum, the British Library, and the Natural History Museum. These participants were to be currently active in different types of research projects, and able to comment on the current practice and research functions in these institutions. This group was important in order to generate data about current research practices, their key characteristics and any issues arising.

Group 2 (G2) - Senior managers (e.g., Directors, Deputy Directors, Chief Officers, Heads of Research, Directors of Collections, Directors of Strategy and Policy etc.) at the British Museum, the British Library, and the Natural History Museum. This group was selected to enable collection of data regarding institutional policy and strategic direction of travel in relation to research functions. This group included participants currently in such posts.

Group 3 (G3) – Individuals that were either in relevant senior positions or have previously been in such positions in other large national cultural organisations, such as V&A, Tate, National Gallery, Historic England, the National Archives, Science Museum Group, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, etc. The purpose of this group was to enable broader understanding of research functions in the sector. This group helped us understand if the issues identified at the British Library, British Museum and Natural History Museum were characteristic of only these institutions, or if they form broader trends.

Group 4 (G4) - Civil servants and policy experts concerned with the UK research, science, higher education, and cultural policies. This group included individuals from central government departments such as BEIS and DCMS, their predecessor bodies, or the relevant arms-length bodies such as Research Councils, UKRI, and the Arts Council. This group also included arms-length bodies which are not in existence any longer such as HEFCE.

Overall, 17 participants were interviewed, generating detailed
transcripts of between 8,000-10,000 words in length each, rich in detail and insight. Figure 3 shows the interviewees spread across different institutions –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>No of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Museum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural History Museum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic England</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V&amp;A</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional museum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHRC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 - Interview participants by institution

Four interviewees worked in more than one relevant institution. Figure 3 records the institution where they were employed at the time of the interview, or, in couple of cases, the institutions which were a primary focus of their interview. Figure 4 below shows detail regarding types of posts held by the interviewees and their employment status at the time of interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group / interview no.</th>
<th>Nature of role</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1.01</td>
<td>Digital curation</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1.02</td>
<td>Senior scientist</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>Natural History Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1.03</td>
<td>Senior curator</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1.04</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>Natural History Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1.05</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1.06</td>
<td>Scientific research</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2.01</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2.02</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>Natural History Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2.03</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2.04</td>
<td>Executive Manager</td>
<td>Retired at the time of interview</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3.01</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>Historic England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3.02</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>Left Kew for a new post before interview</td>
<td>Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3.03</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>Left V&amp;A for a new post before interview</td>
<td>V&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3.04</td>
<td>Executive Manager</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>Regional Museum in the North of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4.01</td>
<td>Senior officer</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>AHRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4.02</td>
<td>Senior officer</td>
<td>In role at the time of interview</td>
<td>HEFCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4.03</td>
<td>Senior officer</td>
<td>Left DCMS for a new post before interview</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 - Interview participant job roles, institutions, and employment status at the time of interview

The interview reference numbers provided in Figure 4 are used for referencing purposes throughout this study.

Just as in the case of the written primary sources the selection of interviewees was affected by the existing demographic profile of staff already
present in the institutions in these types of posts. This means that the
interviewee selection reflects a lack of diversity in terms of race and ethnicity,
as well as a low number of women in curatorial and managerial posts relevant
for this study. All the findings of this study were affected by the lack of diverse
representation in these professional communities.
Figure 5 below describes key characteristics, recruitment criteria and types of questions for the selected interview groups. These criteria were used to plan and deliver the interviews for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group description</th>
<th>Participant recruitment criteria</th>
<th>Objectives in relation to research questions</th>
<th>Key questions areas and types of questions</th>
<th>Timing, sequencing and dependencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1 (G1)</strong></td>
<td>Currently research active and employed by BM, BL or NHM. To fulfil one or more of the following: • PI or Co-PI of one or more research projects • Curatorial specialist with specific area of expertise. • Responsibility for a collection area. • Co-supervising PhD students and/or post docs. • Published research. To represent a range of scientific and arts and humanities disciplines – e.g., archaeology, anthropology, computer science, archival and library research, history, social sciences, environmental sciences, chemistry, zoology, bioscience, study of languages etc.</td>
<td>These interviews were designed to provide data regarding contemporary research status and key trends at BL, BM and NHM. This data would provide a picture from the research front line as to: • Why staff get involved with research activities. • How they perceive value and benefit of this activity, and if this value is recognised. • What organisational and external factors help or hinder their research. • How is this activity funded, evaluated, recorded, and disseminated. This provides a snapshot of the current activity and how it compares with the historic perceptions of such activity recorded in previous surveys and publications (e.g., Lifting the Veil study). Limitations: This data does not provide a comprehensive picture and quantitative data on how much research is taking place in these institutions, of what kind and what quality. The quantitative information comes from the organisational records and reporting, if available.</td>
<td>• Motivations for undertaking research • Enabling mechanisms • Barriers and difficulties • Perceptions of value and benefits for individual researcher, organisation, discipline and society • Awareness of cultural and research policy frameworks, any current policy trends that influence their work • How research fits with their overall job structure and career plans • Publication, reporting and evaluation behaviours, requirements, and expectations • Collaborative elements • Funding</td>
<td>Questionnaire 1 First in the sequence of interviews in order to create a narrative that can inform questions for senior managers and policy makers. (For the questionnaires used see Appendix B, page 466)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Group 2 (G2) | Currently employed by BM, BL or NHM. To fulfil one or more of the following:  
- Departmental or organisational remit related to research, strategy or policy.  
- Senior staff with responsibility over other curatorial staff and collections.  
- As far as possible prioritise interviewees not connected to my own work. | These interviews in one part closely mirror the Group 1 interviews and the same themes as listed for the Group 1. While the themes remain the same as for the Group 1, the objective of these interviews is slightly different. In this group it was important to explore key themes from departmental or organisational perspective, rather than the perspective of individual researcher. Therefore, these interviews had an additional set of questions that explored the interviewees' engagement with either research and cultural policy, and/or organizational management and strategy. It was expected that senior staff were aware and active in responding to external policy pressures and internal policy setting and implementation. The objective was not to explore each policy driver that might currently be in play in the institutions, but to let interviewees paint a picture of those policy drivers that they see as important at present in their work. | First part of this questionnaire followed the same themes as for the Group 1, but some questions are set in a way that explores organisational rather than individual responses and drivers. Additional policy and management questions were added. The questions about policy frameworks were set as open questions, not naming any specific governmental initiatives or policies. The interviewees were free to bring up the issues that they see as important. | Questionnaire 2 – Followed completion of the Group 1 interviews. Questions were adjusted for more senior roles and to explore particular themes that came up in the interviews with the Group 1. (For the questionnaires used see Appendix B, page 468) |
| Group 3 (G3) | Currently employed by a UK national cultural organisation – e.g. V&A, TNA, National Museums of Scotland, Historic England, botanic gardens, Tate etc. Interviewees with either departmental or organisational remit related to research functions. | This group was the same in its characteristics and objectives as the Group 2, but the intended interviewees were from other organisations, not from BL, BM and NHM. The objective was to ensure that there is a broader exploration of the key questions across the sector. These interviews were important in order to compare, confirm or deepen knowledge of key trends arising. | As for the Group 2 | Questionnaire 3 – Identical to and done in parallel with the Group 2. (For the questionnaires used see Appendix B, page 468) |
| Group 4 (G4) | Current or previous staff with policy, strategy or funding remits related to research or broader functions of the UK national cultural organisations. Policy experts in science, research, and culture. Prioritise representation from BEIS, DCMS, AHRC, Research Councils, HEFCE/Research England (and/or their predecessor bodies such as DNH, MLA, BIS, DIUS). Prioritise interviewees with a longer service record in the relevant bodies. Make sure there are no any conflicts of interests with my current role. |
| Figure 5 - Interview selection criteria |

- **The objective of these interviews was to gain understanding how policy makers see the UK national cultural organisation within research landscape.**
- **The interviews had three main objectives:**
  - To explore if and how research in the UK national cultural organisations fits with their own priorities and policies.
  - To explore motivations behind these policies / or absence of such policies.
  - To explore how they see key developments and trends in institutions.
- **These interviews also explored several known tensions:**
  - The absence of strong policy drivers relevant for this agenda.
  - Difficulties and mechanisms for aligning cultural, research and educational policies and approaches across different governmental departments.
  - Departmental and policy fragmentation.
  - Positive and negative effects of the impact agenda in research policy.
  - Cultural and economic value.

**This questionnaire included questions covering:**
- Relevant organisational and governmental policies.
- Motivations for establishing (or not establishing) such policies.
- Key priorities and expected benefits.
- Changes in policy focus over time.
- Key tensions arising in policy formation and implementation.
- Their view of key developments and trends in institutions.

The questions picked up any additional aspects relevant for each interviewee. For example, IRO funding and impact policies for AHRC; or public functions, visitor economy, new audiences, grant-in-aid funding and institutional KPIs for DCMS; REF/RAE for HEFCE, etc.

**Questionnaire 4 – After Group 1 interviews.**
There was no need to sequence these interviews to follow the Groups 2 and 3.
(For the questionnaire used see Appendix B, page 470)
3.4.3 Interviewing process

The interviewees were initially contacted via email, introducing the study’s aims and objectives, and asking if these identified individuals would be interested to be interviewed for this study. The interviews were organised at mutually convenient times, mainly at the interviewees’ institutions, and in few cases at the British Library, when this was the most convenient location. The interviews were held face to face in a range of different spaces – in private and open plan offices, collection stores, staff common rooms, as well as public cafés. In few instances the interview included a tour and a show and tell related to different collections.

All interviews followed the questionnaires provided in Appendix B (see page 466), but it was also possible to depart from the questionnaires if the significant issues not included in the questionnaires were raised and required further exploration. The interviewees deployed different communication styles, and inevitably selected to answer questions that followed their own individual preferences and biases. They all tended to provide a lot of rich detail and explanatory information. It is likely that their answers about their institutions, government and key events were self-censored to certain extent, as they approached the interviews in their professional capacity. However, in many instances they were critical of their institutions and/or the government. In all instances the interviewees were open to discussing both positive aspects of their work and the challenges they were encountering.

All interviews were recorded after the recording and anonymisation process was explained to the interviewees. All interviewees agreed to be recorded and for the interviews to be transcribed. However, in several instances, the interviewees asked for a part of discussions not to be recorded, or to be taken out of the final transcripts, which is further discussed in the ethics section of this chapter. This happened mostly in the Group 1 and mostly when the interviewees judged the question to be particularly sensitive.

Being interviewed by another professional made the conversations easier, and it is likely that this generated a greater degree of trust, as there was a high level of initial understanding regarding institutional context and the
subject matter between the interviewer and the interviewees. However, this was also another possible source of bias, as it is likely that there were issues that were taken for granted on both sides and that would have been more critically approached by an institutional outsider.

3.4.4 Data analysis

The questionnaires used for the four groups were different to each other to account for the interviewees’ different roles (see Appendix B, page 466), resulting in the semi-structured interviews exploring the following themes –

- Institutional set up for research, in terms of its place within organisation, staffing and capacity, reporting mechanisms, as well as barriers and incentives for research within institutions.
- Governance of research, including the role of directors and trustees, as well as institutional strategies.
- Characteristics of research undertaken in the UK national cultural organisations.
- Intended outcomes and outputs of research, including exhibitions, cataloguing, publications, datasets, improvement of public services, conservation, preservation, technological and digital advances.
- Benefits and impacts of research, which included the formal UKRI impact agenda, but also other definitions of benefits and impact offered by the interviewees themselves.
- Different types of research collaborators and partnerships.
- Trend and patterns identified by the interviewees as most likely to influence future changes in this field.
- The relationship between research and the UK government policies, different government departments and arms-length bodies.
- The role of funders of research was explored as a separate theme, but also co-related to the relationship with the UK government and policy landscape.

The richness of data collected made it impossible to explore all these
themes in detail, especially as the intent of this study was to present a big picture over longer period. Therefore, Chapter 4 (see page 102) of this study discusses the data where there are significant differences and developments in relation to the previously published findings, such as in *Lifting the Veil* study (Gunn and Prescott 1999). Also, as this study is interested in the areas of institutional change, these issues are also examined in Chapter 4. This includes development of institutional strategies and research offices, institutional governance, and understanding of benefits and impacts of research. Overall, Chapter 4 aims to provide a picture of the areas where key changes are taking place, as well as a deeper dive into institutional structures and governance.

Key findings regarding institutional relationships with the UK government, governmental policies, relevant arms-length bodies, and with funders are examined separately in Chapter 5 (see page 149). Chapter 5 also explores the place of the UK national cultural institutions within the machinery of government and the impact that this has had on their research functions. All additional data, which adds to our understanding of research characteristics in the UK national cultural organisations, including collections-based and applied research, disciplinary and interdisciplinary trends, digital research, different types of collaborations, publication trends, engagement and communication of research are presented in Appendix D (see page 479). This enabled this study to capture more detailed aspects of these themes, thus enriching our understanding of research in the UK national cultural organisations.

Figure 6 shows how the interview data integrates into different parts of this document –
The interview data was coded and classified using the research software NVivo, which was necessary in order to deal with the large volume of information collected. The questionnaire design followed the themes listed above, which made the coding easier. The interviewees were encouraged to comment on these themes in their own way, and they were also free to identify and follow other themes that they perceived as relevant. During the coding process, the main themes were further split into sub-themes, which emerged during the interview process. Inevitably, different participants provided different emphasis and point of view, or attached more importance and spent more time talking about the issues they identified as more relevant. Considering that the interviews generated very broad, qualitative answers, statistical methods were used sparingly for data analysis, and mainly to show the level of participants engagement with a specific theme or sub-theme. Even then, these quantitative elements were treated with caution, as they were utilising data which emerged from a semi-structured, qualitative interview process. In addition, the coding process itself was based on the subjective interpretation of complex concepts by a single person. Therefore, the most appropriate analysis of these themes is qualitative and descriptive in its nature.

The NVivo organisation of the interview themes shows that the largest proportion of interview discussions was related to research characteristics,
benefits, and impacts. This was closely followed by the themes of outcomes and outputs of research, and, thereafter, the theme of collaboration. These themes often included detailed description of projects, which accounts for the volume of data gathered. Unfortunately, the project details often had to be redacted to enable anonymisation.

The next two themes by volume of responses were regarding organisational set up and governance, which, if combined, would form the largest proportion of the interview information. Somewhat smaller coverage was for the theme exploring institutional relationships with government and funders. Considering that the questionnaires included significant number of questions about government and funding (See Appendix B, page 466), it is interesting that these themes show smaller volume of information. Overall, the interviewees, especially in Group 1, were much more forthcoming discussing the issues that were specific to their institutions and their research. All interviewees, those currently in post, as well as those that were not in post any longer, even those who were retired, were guarded when talking about governmental issues. As already mentioned, this included several requests for comments to be excluded from the transcripts, or certain parts of conversation to remain ‘off the record’. The interviewees were much more open to addressing the issues in their own institutions or professional practice.

Future trends and patterns received the smallest number of responses. This was the last question in a long interview and the time available to explore this topic was not sufficient.
Figure 7 shows the distribution of all the themes and sub-categories after the full coding has been completed in NVivo –

Figure 7 - NVivo analysis of coding showing the main interview themes and sub-themes
3.5 Case Studies

Historical institutionalism frequently deploys comparative or single case studies to arrive to an understanding of social, economic, and political change (Skocpol 1979; Greaves & Grant 2010). Using case studies provides real-world examples of how institutions change and how they shape societal outcomes. Yin (2018: 15) describes case studies as an empirical method that ‘investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context’, especially when ‘the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident’. This study spans both historical and contemporary events, and combines historic evidence found in primary sources with the information obtained through the interviews, which are examining both past and contemporary issues. This link of past and present is also typical of historical institutionalism method -

*Historical institutionalism considers that outcomes of public policies do not just reflect the preferences or interests of the strongest social forces. They are also channeled by existing and past arrangements. Policy choices made in the past shape choices made today.* (Thoenig 2011: 2)

Gerring (2016: 43) points out that –

*If a case is to add to our knowledge of a subject, it must provide new evidence – evidence that is presumably not available – or not easily available or not in as precise or reliable form – for a larger sample.*

The choice to develop three case studies as part of this research reflects a situation where the available evidence from other sources is insufficient. The secondary sources rarely examine the issue of research functions outside of specific research projects, while the primary sources tend to be sporadic and need to be examined in relation to their context in governmental and institutional processes. The intent was that, through the selected case studies in three different organisations, we could collect new data and add new evidence relevant to the research questions. In particular, the case studies intended to investigate the place that research occupied
within these organisations, and to identify any areas of tension and difficulty experienced in this area.

Gerring (2016: 46) also points out the importance of representativeness in the selection of case studies. In studying research functions in the UK national research organisations, a representative sample could have included a coverage of different types of research in relation to their disciplinary context, or different types of objects, or examples of research in different types of organisations. Some such case studies of GLAM research are sometimes available in secondary literature (MGC 1999; Cavalli-Björkman & Lindqvist 2007, Herle 2013). However, while these case studies describe research projects and their characteristics, they do not answer the questions regarding the change in research functions due to institutional behaviours, and the influence of governmental, academic, and institutional actors on these changes. To achieve this, our selection of case studies focused on the moments in time that included documented instances of different actions relevant to research functions taken by institutional and governmental actors. As previously stated, the choice of the British Library, British Museum and the Natural History Museum enables us to look at the environments with a range of research activities, extensive governmental links, and significant documentation regarding their research functions.
3.6 Ethics and bias

Key ethical issues related to this study include - (1) the author’s bias due to current employment at the British Library; and (2) the treatment of interview data because many participants in this research could be identified due to the unique nature of their jobs.

While an element of personal bias is always present in research, this study is closely connected to my work experience. The subject of this study would be more difficult to approach without such professional experience, but, at the same time, working in this specific area in a senior role, means that the personal bias bearing on this study is significant, starting with a conviction and an interest vested in the belief that research in cultural organisations is important and desirable for society and for institutions. I have tried to question my personal views throughout this work, and some of my outlook has changed during the study. For example, at the outset I held the view that governmental actors had much greater negative influence on research functions in institutions, while, at the end, I came to a position where, based on the evidence that emerged from this work, I would attach much greater responsibility to institutional actors.

It is important to stress that I do not see research functions as being more valuable than, for example, work with children or public, including in the situations when these functions appear to have some characteristics of entertainment industry, and which were often perceived as the archenemy of research and science in cultural institutions (Lucas et al. ed. 1990). In every large cultural organisation, there should be plenty of room for entertainment, and for education, and for social benefits, and for research, and they should benefit and enrich each other. Research functions just happen to be the focus of my interest and of this study, and any conclusions regarding the importance of research are never made with an intention to see them as superior to other aspects of institutional work. This includes any instances when this study shows redistribution of resources away from research towards other institutional functions, which tended to be a particularly contentious issue when it comes to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations (Lucas
In addition, my work background has enabled a level of access to relevant documentation and interviewees, as well as the inside knowledge of institutional processes, discussions, and cultures, which otherwise might be more difficult to access. This does not mean that the data have been easy to obtain, but in some instances, it has been easier than it would be to a sector outsider. I have taken several steps to reduce my personal bias in this respect. For example, I did not use any documents that were accessible to me only through work sources, using only those sources that could have been available to anyone. I have not interviewed junior professionals in the institutions, and, specifically, I have not interviewed anyone on a more junior grade than myself at the British Library to eliminate any pressure that the interviewees might have felt during the interviews. However, this has had some negative consequences – the targeting of more senior staff has excluded a range of relevant voices in the institutions, especially the younger generation of research-active staff, who would have brought different insights, especially in terms of the issues of race, decolonisation, gender identities, environmental impacts, as well as freedom of speech and governmental control, which are issues not readily addressed by more senior curatorial and managerial staff.

Appendix A (see page 462) provides my Curriculum Vitae, which identifies any organisations and issues discussed in this study that are particularly close to my work.

Another significant ethical consideration for this study is related to data provided in semi-structured interviews, involving a range of participants from the sector, who, in many cases, could be identified due to the unique nature of their jobs. Initially, I envisaged that some of these interviews would be attributable and published as a separate appendix to this study. Appendix C (page 472) shows the consent forms and information sheets provided to the interviewees. While seven out of seventeen participants have agreed to be fully attributed during the interviews, which were conducted during 2016 and 2017, in the process of writing this study I decided to anonymise all interviews and publish them only as anonymised data.
In part, this decision was made because of the rising level of political and governmental interference in the affairs of cultural organisations. This puts the employees of all government-funded cultural organisations in much more difficult position when commenting on government policy then it was the case when the interviews were first recorded. The so-called ‘culture wars’ (Hope 2020; The Guardian 2021; Hunt 2023) can be related to the issues of research, especially in relation to the issues of restitution of objects, racism, and decolonisation. GLAM research functions are important in helping us to understand collection provenances, as well as institutional processes, policies, and behaviours. The changing political situation has made the overall relations between the government and cultural institutions quite different to what it was at the outset of my research, including the heightened levels of press criticism of institutions and their practices (Tingle 2020; Simpson 2020; Roberts 2021), and in relation to institutional governance matters (Spence 2020; Quinn 2021; Quinn and Grierson 2022). As many interviewees during this study were open in their criticism of government, and many are still employed by the UK national cultural organisations, or within other parts of government, I decided to anonymise all interviews for this study. Anonymisation included redacting the types of collections and projects that the interviewees were associated with because, in the most cases, these are unique collections with sometimes only one or, at best, a handful of individuals associated with them. This does not take away from the study’s intended aims and objectives. Instead of publishing a selection of full interviews, an additional appendix was constructed to include a wider selection of anonymised data collected across all four groups. This data is provided in Appendix D (page 479).

Another reason for deciding to anonymise all interviews was in order to avoid the bias towards more senior participants in this study. All of Group 1 interviews were to be anonymised, which would mean that any published selection would present only the information from more senior participants and would exclude voices of staff that are directly involved in research activities. Therefore, all the interviews were anonymised, and none are published in full and with attribution. This decision means that there is an inevitable loss of longer arguments presented by the interviewees during each interview, as well
as the contextualisation and the nuances of arguments that could be understood only from the overall tone of each conversation, and which would be evident in full transcripts. On the other hand, a selection of only seven full transcripts from a similar type of interviewee would provide an unbalanced view of a much richer and diverse dataset, which is why I felt that on balance the full anonymisation is the best solution.
4 Research in the UK national cultural organisations

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter explores the characteristics of research in cultural organisations today. It is related to the study’s first research question – What are the characteristics of research in national cultural organisations, have these characteristics changed over time, and how? This question has arisen due the lack of recent studies on this subject. Therefore, the Chapter starts with the last comprehensive attempt to answer this question in the UK, which is Lifting the Veil study (Gunn & Prescott 1999), commissioned by the Museums & Galleries Commission in 1999. This Chapter tries to establish similarities and differences in relation to today’s situation. This is achieved by analysing the data collected through the interviews conducted for this study.

This approach will enable us to achieve a broader understanding of key characteristics of research in the UK national cultural organisations, which is necessary to contextualise historic case studies in the later chapters. As explained in the previous chapter (see page 90), this Chapter predominantly focuses on the areas where the most significant differences have been identified, especially in the areas that include position of research within institutional structures, governance of research, and the understanding of research benefits and impacts. Further data, focusing on the issues such as different types of research, nature of changes in curatorial roles, different types of collaborations, outcomes and outputs of research, are presented in Appendix D (pages 479).

This Chapter also explores one of the hypotheses of this study, which is that institutional governance plays significant part in the way in which research functions develop in cultural organisations, especially due to the way in which institutions chose to react to the pressures created by governmental policy, funding, or other external and internal events. The current literature predominantly explores the issues related to curatorial research (Chittenden et. al. 2004; Pringle 2019; Sigfúsdóttir 2021a&b; 2022), which is an important but not the only factor influencing development of institutional research.
functions. The focus on governance and institutional structures aims to expand our knowledge of different factors relevant to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

4.2 *Lifting the Veil: a snapshot from 1999*

*Lifting the Veil* study (Gunn & Prescott 1999), commissioned by the Museums & Galleries Commission in 1999, was the last time research in museums was addressed on a cross sectoral level in the UK. The broader question of research in the UK cultural sector was never looked at from a policy or implementation perspective. Therefore, this study is the best document we have in terms of examining the issue of research taking place in museums. Significantly, the study was done due to ‘a widespread sense of unease’, as ‘research in museums has come under new pressures and closer scrutiny, as shift in funding and in the aims and objectives of museums occur in response to changing attitudes to the provision of customer services’ and ‘uncertainty about the place of the curator in museums’ (Gunn and Prescott 1999: 9-11). More than twenty years on, we could say that the veil has not been fully lifted - we are still looking into a complex, hidden, and little understood landscape, where research appears to thrive, at least in the national institutions, but the sense of unease also remaining.

*Lifting the Veil* (Gunn & Prescott 1999) is a study conceived in a different way to this study. First, it is attempting to provide an analysis of situation across the entire museum and gallery sector, not just national institutions. Second, it excludes libraries, archives, botanical gardens, and other types of cultural institutions where research takes place, while this study includes different types of organisations on the premise that research happens across different types of cultural institutions with a range of similar underlying drivers and issues. In addition, *Lifting the Veil* considers the impact of funding situation (Gun & Prescott 1999: 38-39), but it does not delve into the matters of policy or institutional relationships with government. The report is addressing research as an area that is in crisis, but this crisis is primarily presented as a matter of professional and institutional change - the change in
the nature of curatorial roles that are starting to become more generic and attain more public-facing characteristics (Gun & Prescott 1999: 12; 66-69), and the interconnected change in museum strategies and operations also focusing on improving provision of public-facing services (Gun & Prescott 1999: 11). This omission of policy and government-led changes is somewhat surprising from a report sponsored by a government body, so it is worth noting that many other authors, who engaged with this issue at the time, were more inclined to see the UK government policies as one of the main reasons for the research crisis they were experiencing at the time (see Wilson 1989; Lucas et al. ed. 1990; Gaimster 1999; Anderson 2005).

One area where the report insights are especially valuable is in the data gained through a survey of 162 institutions, and which provides a unique, UK-wide data and insight into institutional set up for research at the time, including the following findings –

- 89.5% of respondents felt that scholarly, collection-based research should have a significant role in museums (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 22).
- 49% included research provision within their objectives, mission statements or forward plans (ibid. p. 22).
- 71% cited general lack of time and 61% financial pressures as limiting factors for research (ibid. p. 7).
- Despite these difficulties, there was a reported increase in research from 1,397 research projects reported in 1978-83 period to 3,057 projects in 1993-98 period (ibid. p. 23).
- On the emotive issue of curatorial or equivalent staffing levels, the report states that there is ‘no across the board discernible pattern in changes in staffing levels over a ten-year period’, with some institutions gaining and some losing staff (ibid. p. 26). It is worth noting that this finding is very different from the contemporary concerns and the archival evidence regarding the loss of curatorial jobs in the UK national cultural organisations at this time (see Gee 1990a&1991; Halstead 1990a&b; NHM DF941/4 archival; BM Trustees: 30 October 1999).
• 36% of responding institutions reported that they give their staff designated research time, raising to 69% in national museums (ibid. p. 29).

• Across the sector, it was mostly curators that were deciding on research priorities (53%), apart from national museums, where directors and section leaders had much greater input (69%), including much higher input from trustees and committees (ibid. p. 30).

• The highest volume of research was linked to exhibition activities (62%), followed by identification, authentication, and dating (61%). (ibid. p. 28).

• There was a concern, across the board, regarding the lack of record-keeping, meaning that ‘the majority of museums are losing track of research that has been done on their collections, and neglecting a useful performance indicator for assessing staff research activity’ (ibid. p. 36).

The report’s recommendations seem imminently sensible – from recommending the inclusion of research into institutional missions, the need to examine the UK Research Councils funding and other funding mechanisms, to exploring the inclusion of research-based KPIs on institutional level (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 84-86). Overall, the emerging picture is of the sector that considers research to be one of its core activities, but with an air of concern about present capacity and future prospects, as well as the lack of direction, coordination and funding (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 7, 81-83). Many of the key issues remain relevant to our study – from the continuous change of curatorial roles to the absence of coordinated policies and reporting. However, by treating the whole sector in the same way and not addressing the prominent issues of its time such as widely publicised curatorial job losses such as those at the British Museum (BM Trustees: 30 October 1999) or the Natural History Museum (NHM DF941/4 archival), often controversial institutional restructures such as one at the V&A (Burton 1999: 238), or the changing governmental priorities, this report does not give us a full explanation of why many perceived research to be in a crisis (Lucas et. al 1990; Griffin 1990a&b; Nature 1990a&b; Anderson 2005).
For this study, it is important to note that the key themes of this report - organisational set up for research, governance, research outputs, benefits, partnerships, and funding are virtually the same themes that have emerged from the interviewing process for this study. And even with the differences in methodology and scope, and more than a twenty-year time gap, the top issues of time and funding, competing pressures, continuing changes in external environment and the absence of coherent research models and reporting for the sector, remain the important issues when it comes to research across the cultural sector and in the UK national cultural organisations. Even the mix of success stories and the persistent concern present under the surface remains very similar today as it was in 1999.

This chapter looks to provide a snapshot of the research situation in the UK national organisations by analysing the interview data collected for this study between 2016 and 2019. This update is necessary as we do not have any other data sources about this subject after *Lifting the Veil* report (Gunn & Prescott 1999). Without establishing some current data this study would not be able to understand how the situation might differs from the issues identified in 1999. Ultimately, without better understanding of the situation at the time of writing, it would be impossible to evaluate significance of past events, and to connect past and present.
4.3 Research and institutional structures

4.3.1 Organisational set up for research

At the time when Lifting the Veil (Gunn & Prescott 1999) was published, the British Museum was already operating its Scholarship Committee for over two decades, and it was at this point experiencing a particularly difficult organisational moment, being set to lose many curatorial posts as a result of long-term underfunding and the impacts of the Great Court construction (BM Keepers: Carey, October 1999; also see Chapter 6, page 240). The Natural History Museum was just emerging from its own curatorial job losses in the early 1990s (Gee 1990a; Bodmer 1990; see also Chapter 8, page 3168.2). The British Library has been opened on its new site in St Pancras for less than a year, just emerging from the spiralling costs of St Pancras building, only to find itself with the operational funding shortfalls for acquisitions, preservation and addressing the fast-developing world of electronic publications (BL 1999). In all three organisations their unique set of circumstances caused a high level of anxiety regarding their organisational futures, especially the future of their traditional research functions.

In comparison, the picture that emerged from the interviews held for this study between 2016 and 2019, as well as from the contemporary organisational documentation, is almost serene. Based on the interviews and contemporary primary sources, we can evidence a significant advancement of research functions in each organisation. This includes a new presence of different levels of organisational set up for research, including research development and support, reporting, as well as relevant decision-making processes. The Natural History Museum reported that it employs over 300 scientists (NHM 2019: 5). The British Museum staff interviewed for this study were confident ‘that research is at the heart of what we do’, while also pointing to a high level of support for research from the Museum’s director and trustees (Interview G2.01). The British Library reported in its 2016-17 research report that, in that year alone, it has been involved in 43 collaborative research projects, including 18 external grants of the combined value of over £14 million
At the time when the interviews were taking place and at the time of writing (2016-2022), each institution had at least one role dealing with institutional research policy and funding. In the case of the Natural History Museum and the British Library, both organisations had a whole department dedicated to supporting research (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.03; G2.02). In the British Museum such support was dispersed across the organisation with only one dedicated coordinating role, but it was achieving similar results in terms of supporting research funding applications, collaborative PhD students, excavations, heritage science, etc. (Interview G2.01; G1.06) All had specific research strategies, as well as internal research committees, or other internal decision-making bodies and processes dedicated to research and science (Interviews G1.01; G1.03; G1.06; G2.01; G2.02; NHM 2019; BL 2019a, 2020, 2022; Hill 2010 unpublished; Hill & Williams 2016 unpublished).

The British Library and the Natural History Museum issued different types of public reports focused on their research and science achievements, and integrated research reporting in their institutional annual reports (NHM 2009, 2010, 2013a, 2020; BL 2018a, 2019a, 2022). The British Museum also reported on their research successes on the Museum’s website and integrated key achievements in its annual reporting (BM 2015, 2017a, 2018). While different types of public reporting of research existed in these institutions before – for example, the British Museum issued the registers of its publications in the 1990s (BM 1994, 1997), and the Natural History Museum issued many different types of science reports through the decades (NHM 1956; NHM 1962) – the contemporary reports appear to be more frequent, in some cases they are issued annually, and are more public friendly, containing a wider range of activities (e.g. PhD student work, digitisation etc.).

All these developments provide evidence for significant level of research activity in these institutions and the new level of professionalisation in its management and reporting in relation to Gunn & Prescott report (1999).
4.3.2 From scholarship to research

The major change in the twenty-year period since *Lifting the Veil*, is the change in the organisational understanding of research and, subsequently, the way in which it is organised. Until relatively recently the UK national cultural organisations described their research activity as scholarship. The term scholarship, even though less popular today, is still used. In his 1992 Report to the Committee on Scholarship at the British Museum, Lawrence R. H. Smith, Keeper of the Department of Japanese Antiquities, develops his own definition of the purpose of scholarship within the Museum, providing us with a curatorial perception of research at this turbulent time for research in the UK national cultural organisations. According to Smith the purpose of scholarship is –

a) *To enable acquisitions to be made with adequate knowledge of exactly what are being acquired and to relate them to other collections, and hence to definable academic and museum collecting policies.*

b) *To be able to provide conservators with the necessary historic and cultural information to allow them to do their work in a way which is as fully informed as possible, and which recognizes our responsibilities to the wider academic world.*

c) *To provide accurate information in our displays to visitors, in exhibition catalogues and other books to the wider public, and in adequate dissemination of information on what we have, either through indexes of through more ambitious forms of publication, for the benefit of the academic community in general. This last is the most difficult and most problematic in view of our broad holdings.*

*(BM Scholarship: 17 December 1992)*

This definition relates to the Museum’s practice at the time, but it also remains applicable today. In recent times, however, the word scholarship has fallen out of fashion. A senior manager at the British Museum, interviewed for this study, describes how the change at the British Museum was catalysed by the awarding of the IRO status to the British Museum by the AHRC, which took
place in 2006-7 (AHRC 2017: 3) -

… the big shift in becoming an IRO was the recognition that we are not an organisation of scholars and connoisseurs, but an organisation of researchers. And that, for the first five years of the job, was a massive challenge, to change the organisation from being an organisation of connoisseurs to being an organisation of researchers. (Interview G2.01)

… It was a long battle. But you had to train curators and scientists that research was about questions and that this is now about thinking about the world in terms of projects, which need to be delivered, and that changes what the job of the curator, or the job of the Head of department is. (Interview G2.01)

The IRO changes will be further explored in the next chapter (see page 188), but for now we are noting the change from the scholarship of old and the research of present day. While the definitions of research might differ across the UK national cultural organisations, research functions in these organisations still include many common characteristics. One such common change, as seen in the above example, includes a shift in understanding of research as a time-bound, usually externally funded activity, which requires a buy-out of curatorial or other staff time, rather than being a more open-ended activity integrated with curatorial jobs (Interviews G1.01; G1.05; G2.01). That is – if it is curators conducting research at all – as the new research paradigm often includes entire departments or new types of jobs dedicated to scientific or other types of research, including career structures, funding sources, collaborative projects, infrastructure and performance indicators that are sometimes more akin to university research or research undertaken in independent research institutes (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G2.01; G3.03, also see Appendix D page 487).

While the aspects of acquisition, conservation and exhibition research remain relevant, just as defined by Smith (BM Scholarship: 17 December 1992), in many institutions there is a rising ambition to address research questions beyond the most immediate, applied collection relevance. This
might include using collections as a steppingstone to approach blue-sky, curiosity-driven research questions, with much broader aims of furthering understanding of collections and their context (Interview G1.02; G1.03; G1.06; also see Appendix D page 481).

There are many other signs of greater professionalisation of research – first, in terms of accessing new sources of research funding, and second, through the changed expectations in the type of research outputs and outcomes delivered (Interviews G1.01; G1.2; G1.03; G1.05; G1.06). For example, if the goal is an external publication, it is more frequent nowadays that these publications need to count in terms of impact factors and bibliometrics as some institutions ‘encourage a shift from publishing in the sort of Hampstead naturalist journal to publishing in Nature’ (Interview G2.02, also see Appendix D page 508). Just like in universities, the research culture of institutions now includes a mix of grand sounding ambitions for the long-term impact of research (NHM 2019) and the precariousness of project-led research culture, with the increase of short-term research funding and fixed-term staff contracts (Interview G1.01; G1.03). This is further explored later on in this chapter.

4.3.3 Integration of research with curatorial roles

One of the key distinguishing features in institutional organisation of research, which goes back to the restructures of the 1990s, but was still felt to be important by the interviewees, is if research is separated out from curatorial departments and jobs, or if it remains integrated within curatorial roles. Interestingly, this defining issue of the 1990s research debates (Lucas et al. ed. 1990) produced very different models and philosophies of research in otherwise closely related institutions. Based on the interviews for this study, the British Museum is the strongest proponent of the full integration of research and curatorial roles (Interview G2.01). On the side of separating research functions, we find the Natural History Museum and also V&A (Interviews G1.02; G2.02; G3.03). The British Library is somewhere in between, with a continuing integration of research within curatorial roles, but also a range of
service-based and digital research functions which sit elsewhere in the organisation. The adherence to these different approaches and the reasoning that underpins them is at times strongly held. A senior manager at the British Museum said -

But, a crucial question here to ask is how we did not go down the V&A route. We took a conscious decision that the V&A are wrong in creating a research department. And that was a very conscious decision that actually, rightly or wrongly, the perception from the British Museum was that the V&A have basically decided that the core job of curator was not to carry out research or scholarship, that you carried out research and scholarship only if you are transferred to the research department. While the assumption here has always been to try and hold on the that traditional model of the Librarian / Curator, who is someone who did everything. (Interview G2.01)

…And by re-defining the role of the curator in this way, then all of our curatorial departments are research departments. That is their job. (Interview G2.01)

We find that this view has been frequently voiced in the previous decades, including in Lifting the Veil report, where one interviewee from a learned society claims that –

…the V&A decision to divorce curatorial and research functions has far reaching implications for provincial museums who no longer see the need for their staff to study or even have an intelligent interest in their collections. (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 15)

On the other side of the equation, an interviewee from V&A explained why the V&A Research Institute (VARI) was created as a separate entity, a move that was masterminded, according to this interview, by Martin Roth, V&A Director at the time, and Mariët Westermann, the Executive Vice President of the Mellon Foundation -

[Mariët] was very excited about the possibility of access, but also of activating this relationship between objects and research in a museum setting in a new way. She knew that within the existing structure and
the beast that is these big, national organisations, it was always going to be difficult. There would always be structural silos, and inertia, and other priorities, and confusing message to the public. You know, 'What are you? What kind of institution are you?' Whereas a new structure devoted to opening up our entire non-displayed collection. Great. So, she funded quite heavily a thing that then we submitted and named and got the funding for as the V&A Research Institute, so VARI. (Interview G3.03)

The Mellon Foundation played a similar role at the British Library through its funding of the BL Labs, which was funded by the Mellon Foundation for over 10 years, including a similar model that looked to generate innovative digital research within a separate entity, thus giving more scope for innovation (Mellon Foundation 2012). The BL Labs were to pioneer the Library’s research experimentation with digital collections.

Looking at the further examples of separation of research from curatorial roles, a senior officer from the Natural History Museum explained their structure as follows -

…we have two large boxes at the museum, which is Public Engagement, which deals with schools’ education, galleries and programmes, and then you have Science. And Science deals with collections, research, data, digitisation. There are crossovers, and those are quite interesting. But in short, we have a group of people within Science whom we call researchers, research-scientists, and those range from PhD students through post docs to mid-career scientists, up to a professorial level. And we recruit at all those levels. (Interview G2.02)

And they immediate added -

Curatorial roles sit outside that. But interestingly curators also do research. (Interview G2.02)

On further inspection, and despite a perception of two distinct approaches, this area seems to be more ambiguous than it initially appears. The conversation with curatorial staff at the Natural History Museum confirmed
that research is central to their work, including a unique capacity to engage in the discovery of new species as a part of fieldwork, acquisition and description of the Museum’s collection (Interview G1.04). Similarly, the interview with the Natural History Museum scientist confirmed their absolute conviction that their work is strongly collection-based and can be done only in proximity to the Museum’s collections, even if they did not have any collection development or care responsibilities (Interview G1.02). Equally, while holding fast to the strong link between curatorial roles and research, the British Museum is deploying a buy-out policy, where external funding buys out curatorial time for significant research projects, indicating that certain types of research cannot be completely integrated with curatorial day-to-day duties, or achieved with the internal resources and funds available. The British Museum’s scientific research is also organised differently to curatorial research as it sits across the organisation. Thus, the British Museum’s scientific research operates under its own strategy, while also integrating with and supporting curatorial research (Interviews G1.05; G1.06; G2.01).

The genesis of the institutional research philosophies and organisational arrangements for research go back in time, sometimes still harking back to the 18th or the 19th century, but in terms of institutional structures, these have often been solidified or changed during the turbulent institutional restructures of the 1990s. For example, the separation of research and provision of a separate research department at the V&A goes much further back to the changes implemented by Martin Roth - it is one of the legacies of Elizabeth Esteve-Coll’s controversial reforms in the 1990s, including her reorganisation of the V&A that separated administrative and operational functions from scholarship. At the time this was interpreted by many as an attack on scholarship and the furthering of managerialism (Burton 1999: 238; Gunn and Prescott 1999: 15; Adams 2010: 33). These reforms provide a context for the later formation of VARI. In the same way, the separation of science from curation at the Natural History Museum was instituted by Neil Chalmers as a part of his own equally controversial reforms and restructures in the same period (Interview G2.02; Gee 1991; NHM DF941/4 archival, also see Chapter 8, page 316).
In many instances these events of couple of decades ago have been forgotten, or they were never known about by staff joining these institutions subsequently. The archival sources include the record of these complex change processes from the second part of the 20th century. However, in the interviews with the present staff, we often find that, while the trajectory of institutional philosophies created at this time, or in the earlier periods, still survives, the original rationale for these organisational policies and decisions might be misunderstood or deployed in an entirely different context by the subsequent generations. The creation of VARI at the V&A, or the integration of research into curatorial roles at the British Museum, remain significant for how these institutions understand their research functions today, but the exact circumstances of the original events that led to their formation might become lost. The cross checking of the interviews and the written primary sources has been invaluable in making sure that we arrive to a more accurate historic picture. However, we must also recognise that the memory retained in the institutions, even when incorrect, is important in shaping the current organisational culture and rationale informing their strategies and actions.

As we have seen with the V&A example, and with the BL Labs, the decisions to create separate research structures was sometimes linked to funding opportunities, or a need to create more agile environments in otherwise complex institutions. This is especially relevant in sciences and in relation to digital developments, where the institutions face the issue of being competitive on the same level playing field as universities and other research institutes, as well as managing the risks of short-term funding and fast-changing technologies. Crucially, within the current landscape the structure of project-based, time-bound, and externally funded research projects is a prevalent model for research in all UK national cultural organisations regardless of their position of integrating or not integrating research within curatorial roles.
4.3.4 Barriers and incentives

The existence of research offices and dedicated staff is making a great difference to research functions in the UK national cultural institutions, especially in supporting funding and reporting of research (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.05). However, the interviewees described several barriers to further development of research functions on both strategic and operational levels. The issues that were most frequently mentioned in the interviews were –

- Low pay in relation to universities and other research environments.
- Short term contracts, in terms of both lack of job security and sustainability of research.
- Inadequate administrative support, including funding and bidding support, HR services and line management.
- Time pressures and issues of integrating research with other duties and priorities.
- Research being low on the list of organisational priorities.
- Ambiguity regarding research definitions and purposes in the organisation.
- Lack of integration with other functions within organisation.
- Poor visibility of research within and outside institution.

The issue of low pay has been voiced by many –

*I think, honestly, the salary is not comparable. So, we don’t get paid as much as I would if I had the same job at a university.* (Interview G2.02)

And in terms of short-term project contracts –

*So, people doing research projects always come on fixed term projects, always on fixed term contracts. They come off at the end of project. Often, they roll on onto another project, so we have people here who have been here for quite a few years doing research projects.* (Interview G1.01)

While there are research offices in existence, some research-active
staff view the current provision as inadequate -

So, we have minimal administrative support, and minimal cadre of capable project managers, who know how to do a research project, minimal support for doing things like bid writing, minimal support for doing things like costing and this sorts of basic stuff for bids, not much in a way of real process around transitioning things from research into service. So, there is a whole range of things that are, I’d say, not dysfunctional, but not at the level of a top tier research institute or university. (Interview G1.01)

I think, there needs to be better support for research in heritage institutions. But, I think, they want their cake and they want to eat it. They want to have the money that comes from AHRC and other grants, but they don’t want to actually put in place the support that is seriously needed. (Interview G1.03)

It is worth noting that the issue of the availability of funding was not mentioned by the interviewees, either in terms of specialist research funding, or in terms of the pressure on grant-in-aid funds. However, the lack of resources and low institutional capacity to undertake research was mentioned often. In relation to research funding, the main issue was capacity and time needed to access funding. This represents a big change in relation to Lifting the Veil report, where the issue of funding availability is one of the central issues identified (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 54). All interviewees were extremely conscious of the need and the obligation on them to raise research funds. The level of this requirement varied in different institutions – in the Natural History Museum, it included formal targets on both managerial and individual scientist levels –

So, we have a research expectation which are based mostly on publications and also on grant income. So, grant income is probably really the most important thing at the moment. And it’s also based on supervising and training students and little bit on public engagement as well. (Interview G1.02)
So, depending on which area of science you are working in, you might have a higher income target or a lower income target, and you’re expected to apply for grants and bring those in, and to produce a certain number of articles in higher Impact journals. (Interview G2.02)

The British Museum and the British Library do not have formal funding targets, the main incentive being to raise money in order to enable research, as it would not happen, or it would be much reduced, without external funds -

So, the British Museum supports the staff costs and the infrastructure costs of day-to-day support. So, we have an annual budget and so on for staff, equipment, consumables, etc. We’re actively encouraged to seek external funding, and this has been written into the Scientific Research Strategy. (Interview G1.06)

The funding situation would be very different outside the UK national cultural organisations. The interviewee from a regional and university museum interviewed for this study, referred to general funding pressures arising from both the lack of local authority funding and changes in university funding (Interview G3.04). Funding pressures in the public library and archival sector are even greater with the long-term trend of institutional closures due to the lack of funds (Woodhouse & Zayed 2019). Equally, it is more difficult for these organisations to access different sources of research funding.

In the institutions where research was integrated with curatorial or other functions, several interviewees described how their research is affected by the pressure to fit it alongside their other duties or is done in their own time. This applied even when their time was ‘bought out’ as it often did not include preparation of funding bids and research work done between funded projects, or the ‘bought out’ time was just insufficient (Interviews G1.01; G1.03: G1.05). The following views describe different aspects of these conflicting pressures -

It’s often, I think, doing these external funded projects is often viewed as extra work. So, people will have their job profile that does not include them. And they will often be held to account for successful delivery, but often not freed that much from their other day to day activities. (Interview G1.01)
I had a very different pressure here, because there was quite a lot of nervousness about the idea that I might get money to take time away from my day-to-day job. (Interview G1.03)

Regarding doing the rest of the work, writing this, I had to spend a lot of evenings, weekends, that sort of thing, doing it. That is very common. (Interview G1.05)

While research support capacity in the UK cultural institutions has grown over decades, provision of adequate support is not the norm, and even within the same institution researchers in different departments might have different experiences of how supported they felt. In the situations where line managers did not have any research experience themselves, these issues were particularly difficult, especially in relation to time allocation and performance management (Interview G1.03; G3.03).

While universities were often mentioned as an environment with better research support, it is important to note that this does not mean that the interviewees viewed universities as ideal research environments. Overall, the interviewees were extremely critical of university research models especially in relation to ‘publish or perish’ culture, and chasing of impact, which is further explored later in this chapter, in the sections about research benefits and impact (see page 140) and also in Appendix D (see page 533).

In addition to the lack of practical research support, the interviewees were often critical of the institutions’ overall commitment to research -

So, we articulated research as being important responsibility, one of our purposes, but that mixes support for research and researchers with doing and conducting research. And so, that ambiguity is not yet resolved, actually. (Interview G1.01)

…you do it by dogged determination rather than because your institution supports it properly. (Interview G1.03)

This was further compounded by the sense of having to justify their existence and remit both internally and externally. One interviewee described how some staff in their institution referred to their research department as ‘the
crèche', a place where you go ‘to be looked after and to play, and not do your work’, a place ‘where only the privileged few and the very elite were allowed to go’ (Interview G3.03). The accusations of elitism in relation to research functions has been a long-standing feature of the discussions about research in cultural organisations (Cossons 1991), which is a view that still persists today despite the evidence of low paid staff on fixed term contracts (Interview G1.01; G3.03).

Another perennial issue that has been reported extensively by the interviewees is a difficulty in connecting with other parts of their organisation. While many interviewees referred to specific programmes designed to break the institutional silos (Interviews G1.06; G2.01; G2.03), siloed working is still in evidence in the majority of the UK national cultural organisations. It appears in many different guises – sometimes as difficulties in connecting digital research with institutional technology developments, or connecting research with learning teams, or connecting research with marketing, exhibition and interpretation functions, etc. One interviewee described their experience as follows -

*I think, the Museum is trying to be a bit more joined up in its thinking, so we are starting to be involved more. So, for example, there is going to be a [redacted] exhibit in 2018, and me and the curators are going to be involved in helping to design that, which is really good, so we are going to be involved from the beginning, trying to define it. So, that is really good. In the past it has not worked so well. So, the [redacted] galleries, where you came in, those were opened 20 years ago, I think, and the scientists at the time were really upset that they weren’t involved at all in designing that. They were not asked to be involved, and in fact the PEG - the Public Engagement Group - asked external consultants to help define the science which really annoyed the scientists who were here at the time… It is embarrassing if there is a scientific exhibition in your field and there is something in there that is not right, or it is not the way you would’ve done it, and then if your colleagues come and visit and they say - why is this like this, and you...*
have to say – I didn’t have anything to do with it. It can be embarrassing. (Interview G1.02)

The issues of internal disconnect, lack of recognition of research functions, and ineffective research support were made worse by the issue of insecurities stemming from the uncertainty of research remit for themselves or their organisation (also see Chapter 5, page 180). For many it meant a battle on several ends – externally, to convince academics that their work is academic enough, and, internally, to convince their institution that research is relevant and worthy of their time and resources. In addition, it was important that research was visible to their institutions and to general public.

I feel a little bit on the back foot. I feel that people feel that universities are more academic. And I feel I have to justify what I do. (Interview G1.02)

It’s always a battle. It is really a battle, because I think most people think of us as somewhere to take kids on a wet weekend. And so, they only think of it as being a visitor attraction rather than a scientific organisation and we are battling to try to tell people that we are a research organisation. (Interview G1.02)

The uncertainty perceived by these researchers was in relation to how their research compare to university research, and also the perceptions of research value in the institutions in relation to their public functions. Some such uncertainty was also expressed in relation to governmental policies and institutional remits, which is further explored in Chapter 5 (page 174). The above issues should be read in the context of high level of dedication and conviction amongst these interviewees that doing research within the UK national cultural organisations is vital. In particular, the interviewees identified collections as their main incentive and reason for being involved with this type of research.

Well, obviously, the big thing is the collections. I could not do the work that I do anywhere else because here I get to use these completely unique collections. So, that is the thing. That is the unique selling point
of the Museum and what makes it easy for me to do what I do.
(Interview G1.02)
4.4 Governance

4.4.1 Directors and trustees

_Lifting the Veil_ report finds that national museums have much higher instance of director and trustee involvement when determining their research priorities than other museums participating in this survey (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 30). This finding links to a long-standing strand of discussion about the role of museum directors as, not only managers, but intellectual and academic leaders of their institutions (Wilson 1990: 98; Anderson 2005: 302). During the 1990s, it was another highly charged discussion in the context of the perceived take-over of managerialism. David Wilson, Director of the British Museum from 1955 to 1964, tells us in his book on the purpose and politics of the British Museum that ‘the Museum must be run by people who are professionally involved in the collections and who are academically able to deal with them’, and that ‘business ability, educational prowess and public relations must all be subordinated to this’ (Wilson 1989: 119). On the other side of this debate, we have the opinion of Neil Cossons, Director of the Science Museum from 1986 to 2000, who writes –

_I believe that good scholarship is the energy source of the museum. But scholarship and the museum cannot survive or fulfil their real potential without sound corporate management. One of the problems has been that to have reached the position of keeper of a curatorial department in one of our great museums was to be singularly unqualified to run the institution. To be expert in content was one thing, to manage the process was another. This does not mean that all scholars have to be managers but they do have to be managed._ (Cossons 1991: 186)

Based on the interviews conducted for this study, the high level of director and trustee involvement remains a key feature of research functions in the UK national cultural institutions. Almost all interviewees for this study referred to the role that their directors and trustees had in different aspects of their research functions. Even in the institutions where the director role is
predominantly managerial, with direct research leadership sitting elsewhere in the institution, research remained linked to the highest levels of institutional governance.

The strongest link emerged in the British Museum interviews, which is not surprising, as historically the institution held a strong view of its Director as its intellectual leader, as we have just seen expressed by David Wilson (Wilson 1989: 119). The interviewees mostly referred to Neil MacGregor, which was to be expected because the interviews at the British Museum were conducted in 2016 and 2017, just as he was to leave the British Museum, or shortly after he left.

The following were the views of British Museum managerial staff from the Group 2 (G2) -

_We are a knowledge-based organisation. So, under Neil MacGregor, research has been put at the heart of everything we do, because research underpins the quality of how we do anything with our collection in public. So, it is all about ideas._ (Interview G2.01)

_**Intellectual leadership is crucial. I mean, if you ever spoke to Neil MacGregor he would say - I don't know what research is. I don't do it. And, I understand what he meant. He would do these really successful projects like the Hundred Objects, and he had this extraordinary talent of being able to jump from one culture to another to another, and from one field to another, and help curators bring out what they knew, so in a sense he would... he said – my work is all superficial - which is true, because he didn’t have deep knowledge of the Assyrians, or the Romans, but he could link them together in the way that showed other people their importance and that was a real talent._ (Interview G2.04)

A close director involvement was also described by the curatorial staff from the British Museum in the Group 1 (G1), even on an individual project level -

_I have to admit, I don't know exactly the genesis of that project. [redacted] I believe it was because the previous Director, Neil_
MacGregor, has a strong interest in [this area], and how it relates to different ancient cultures. (Interview G1.05)

Equally, the British Museum interviewees described the strongest link between their trustees and research, indicating that their leadership is a driving force enabling the institution to retain its research focus even within the governmental environment that is either hostile or indifferent to it –

[Trustees] know about our research. The challenge for us is to get DCMS to accept that the major institutions are also research institutions. That is the challenge because, as you know, the DCMS model, under much of the New Labour, was that we are here to effectively deliver education and social benefit, that museums are not collections and also research organisations. So, we look at what is going on at the outside world, but we have a very clear steer from the trustees that our job isn’t simply to follow fashion. (Interview G2.01)

The involvement of the trustees is channeled through the Trustees’ Research Committee, a successor body of the Scholarship Committee which existed in various guises from 1974 -

There is a separate Trustees’ Committee, called the Trustees’ Research Committee. Its job is to assure the Trustees of the quality of our research and that the Research Strategy is being implemented successfully. And the reason they have that is because they know that research is important. There is no other similar area of the Museum’s activity that has a sub-committee. There are sub-committees to do with money and running the Museum, and advocacy, but there isn’t a collections Trustees’ sub-committee, or an exhibition Trustees’ sub-committee. There is only a research sub-committee. (Interview G2.01)

Another British Museum interviewee described a historical role of the Trustees' Research Committee as follows –

In the 1990s the trustees were quite worried about how the Museum was going, so they started pushing into many areas of management including scholarship. And then after, when there was a change in leadership, they sort of moved back out into the areas that they more
traditionally should occupy, looking into the overall approach and strategy and leaving individual issues to the management. (Interview G2.04)

The Scholarship Committee and its work has been developed into a case study in Chapter 6 (see page 204). The Committee’s work spans the areas of research, institutional governance, and the Museum’s relationship with the UK government. The interviewees for this study did not raise the issue of the independence of the Boards of Trustees from the government in relation to research or other governance issues. The question of governmental influence on the Boards of Trustees in GLAM institutions, either due the accusations of more political trustee appointments, or the direct governmental pressure on institutions to implement certain policies such as ‘retain and explain’ policy in relation to the contested heritage (Harris 2021; Spence 2021), became of greater interest for the sector and general public only after the interviewing for this study has been completed. However, the three case studies provide many historic examples of closeness between different governments and institutional governance bodies and the impact that this had on their research functions (see Chapter 6, page 212 & Chapter 7, page 257).

The Natural History Museum interviewees have also noted the important role played by their Director and trustees, but within a different model, which separates scientific leadership from institutional leadership. Director of Science undertakes scientific leadership at the Natural History Museum. At the time the interviews were taking place, Director of Science was Professor Ian Owen, who joined the Museum from Imperial College. He was succeeded in 2019 by Dr Tim Littlewood, who was promoted internally, having previously been a scientist in the Museum’s Department of Life Sciences. This role of scientific leadership and its importance was described as follows –

…if you're going to lead people who are really at professorial level, you need to earn their respect. And respect is earned by achievement. So, if you yourself are doing research at a professorial level, then, they won't necessarily admit that they respected you, but they will. (Interview G2.02)
When asked if the Museum put forward any evidence related to science into their submission for the DCMS Museum’s Review (DCMS 2017a), which was being undertaken at the time, an interviewee from the Natural History Museum said –

*So, that is much more the Director’s thing. And I think that he is very conscious of it being a conversation. So, he did put in a submission. I would not say that [research] was more than an element in a much wider conversation that he tends to have with senior civil servants. So, he meets the Permanent Secretary. So, whom I meet… – the Director meets a different group of people – so, he meets Permanent Secretaries, Director Generals of DCMS and it is an on-going conversation.* *(Interview G2.02)*

This interviewee also recalled the time when scientific leadership was more integrated into the Director’s role, in a way that is much more similar to the British Museum –

*And before that, the Director was always a very senior academic. Sometimes from within the Museum. But, the previous Director was Neil Chalmers, and he had been Dean of Science at the Open University. So, again, it means that they are able to take critical view of the research. Also, more than half of, not more than half, about half, of our Trustees are scientists. And many of those are Fellows of the Royal Society.* *(Interview G2.02)*

Interestingly, it was Neil Chalmers that pushed through the separation and professionalisation of science at the Natural History Museum despite a significant opposition at the time *(Lucas et. al. ed. 1990; Gee 1990a, 1991; NHM DF941/4 archival).*

The advocacy for research undertaken by directors was mentioned by the interviewees in all three organisations *(Interviews G1.03, G2.01, G2.02).* While much of it happens in one-to-one meetings, sometimes the advocacy takes place in public, such as during the UKRI launch, held at the British Library in 2018. On this occasion, Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library, said -
Here at the British Library, we believe research and innovation are vital, not only for the health of the economy, but for the life of everyone in society. It is a thought that this very building is shaped around. (Maricevic 2018)

The other speakers included Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Sam Gyimah MP, Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation; Sir John Kingman; UKRI Executive Champion for Equality, Professor Jennifer Rubin, Executive Chair of the ESRC; and Sir Mark Walport, UKRI first Chief Executive.

Image 5 - Launch of UKRI at the British Library in May 2018.
From left to right: Sir John Kingman, Professor Jennifer Rubin, Roly Keating, Greg Clark MP, Sir Mark Walport. © British Library Board

Unlike the British Museum and the Natural History Museum, the British Library does not have any research sub-committees on the Board level, but research matters are included in the Board and Advisory Board agendas, not on a regular basis but mostly when the major research projects or partnerships are agreed, or when specific services for researchers are considered. However, the Library interviewees referred to the existence of the Library’s Research Strategy Group that has a role to guide the Library’s research (Interview G1.01).
The importance of director and trustee leadership for research was also emphasised by the interviewees from other institutions (Interviews G3.02, G3.03). We have already seen the V&A example of the Director’s role in the formation of VARI. With Martin Roth at the V&A and Neil MacGregor at the British Museum, in particular, the interviewees described how the choice of director, including their experience and intellectual leadership, can be very closely interweaved with the ethos and history of institutions (Interviews G2.01, G3.03). The direction taken by the UK national cultural institutions is to large extent determined by their trustees and directors. While they are always acting within a complex environment that requires a consideration of very different external and internal stakeholders, multiple policy and legal requirements, as well the always changing funding environment, it is clear that research remains an important part of their role. A vision of directors and trustees can make a significant difference of how the whole institutions perceives its purpose and priorities, and how it communicates internally and externally. These roles are of special significance in relation to institutional relationships with different parts of government, including advocacy for its research functions as we have seen in the above examples. In many instances directors and trustees remain active in formulating and validating the strategic aspects of research functions and are even involved with individual research projects and key relationships with research funders and stakeholders.

One interviewee summarised its view of the directors’ role as follows -

When I began, I used to think that institutions are bigger than any individual, but I changed my mind. I think it really depends on who is at the top. It makes a big, big difference. (Interview G2.04)

4.4.2 Organisational Strategies

We have already seen that the UK national cultural organisations have relatively developed strategic frameworks related to their research functions. Because these documents provide a top-level direction for the institutions, the interviews for this study explored the significance of institutional strategies for institutional research functions.
The British Library main commitment to research is expressed in its corporate strategy, *Living Knowledge*, which says –

*We support and stimulate research of all kinds.* (BL 2015: 16)

Which is expanded as follows –

*A strong research base is vital to a healthy economy, and since its foundation the British Library has occupied a central position in the UK’s infrastructure of research and innovation* (BL 2015: 16)

However, unlike the Natural History Museum and the British Museum, the British Library does not have a separate research strategy, partly due to the difficulties in integrating different aspects of organisational research, which is closely related to its collections, but also its operational functions.


*Our vision is of a future where both people and the planet thrive. To achieve this, we will harness the powerful combination of our three key assets: our collection, our scientific research and our reach to a worldwide audience on our mission to create advocates for the planet.* (NHM 2019: 7)

The Natural History Museum interviewee explained the Museum’s Science Strategy as follows -

*So, the Museum has a new Science Strategy, which is trying to be more relevant, so dealing with things like climate change, bio-diversity and so on. So, tackling disease, things like that. It’s trying to kind of deal with the big-picture, societal issues.* (Interview G1.02)

The British Museum Research Strategy from 2016 states that -

*… the Museum actively promotes research of the highest quality by its own staff and supports the research of others. This research is intended to advance the future care, display and public understanding of the history of humanity as represented by the objects in the British Museum's collection and other collections, and to help people learn,*
understand and be inspired by human history through objects. (Hill & Williams 2016, unpublished)

It is evident from the above statements that the shaping of the strategies in these institutions is influenced by the UK government priorities for science and research. The British Library is linking its strategy to the UK research infrastructure frameworks (BEIS 2017; UKRI 2020a&b; UKRI 2022a), while the Natural History Museum is linking its strategy to the grand challenge of climate change and environmental urgency (BEIS 2021a; UKRI 2022b). The British Museum is linking its strategy to public understanding of research, therefore linking with both the cultural participation policies (DCMS 2016b) and the research impact agenda (AHRC 2017, 2018 & 2019). The interviewing process provided some further information regarding the strategy development processes in the institutions. The interviewee from the Natural History Museum explained -

We’ve experimented with different ways of delivering strategic capability. Sometimes that will be short term. You would say – well, okay, there’s a new question here. You can look at the government policy – so, what’s government worried about. Is it interested in climate change, or biodiversity? Or is it interested in sources of rare minerals? … there are all sorts of things you could identify. And is there a funding opportunity that goes with that? So, can our collection and our expertise be brought to bear on that issue which is of a key importance for society. So, that is often a short-term response, but some of these things, you say – well, Ok, this is going to go on for a long time. (Interview G2.02)

The similar process is also described by the British Library interviewee, describing the Library’s consideration of policies coming from different government departments as a part of its strategy formation -

… So, the narrative that we play across departments is really key. It’s not necessarily the same narrative, but, for example, with Business, Innovation and Skills we need to show that we’re receptive. We talked a lot about a part of the knowledge infrastructure, and infrastructure,
This tailoring of research strategies to fit with the BEIS-led science and innovation policy priorities, especially in terms of supporting economic growth, at first glance appears to be identical to strategic planning in universities or other scientific organisations that tailor all their research strategies to follow relevant governmental priorities, especially those focused on economic and social impacts (Oxford Economics 2017; UCL n.d.). However, as we already know, the UK national cultural organisations have DCMS as their home government department and that means that these organisations must fit within the DCMS-led cultural policy frameworks first and only later attempt to balance different policy frameworks that are important to them, even if they originate in other government departments. Historically, achieving this balance was always an issue for the institutions, sometimes leading to a high level of friction with the government (Wilson 1989, Strong 1997, Anderson 2005). This is not only the case at present. This type of situation existed across many different governmental administrations and within different iterations of the machinery of government across the post-war period, as we will further explore in Chapter 5 (pages 150 & 180), and also in the three case studies in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

However, the interviews completed for this study indicate that the institutions are starting to find the ways to balance their cultural and research strategic priorities, and that they are more conscious of the need to create strategic narratives that can help them explain how they fit with these different sides of the UK government policy narrative. The interviewee at the Natural History Museum explained the tensions arising due to the need to link policy environment from different government departments, in this case DCMS and BEIS, as well as a potential way to knit them together -
But there is an oddity in all of that, that the environment – if you think about the language that is used – they will talk about culture, they will talk about the arts, and those are fluid terms. Science is not generally seen as a cultural activity. Yet, what we do, what Science Museum does is – we are purveying science as a cultural good. So, cultural consumption of science is what we are about. Therefore, we need science to be recognized as a part of cultural landscape. That isn't to say that fundamental research is funded from the culture budget. There is also a tricky thing in my view – it is not simply a policy thing – it is personal attitudes of politicians. Art is for grown-ups. Science is for children and eccentric enthusiasts, and professionals ...But it means that, while in theory DCMS does not have any subject specific brief – there is a natural cultural bias, which says – fine art to some degree, and opera and all those sorts of things are middle class interests, which makes it easy to attract ministers in that sense - TV, broadcasting, all those sort of things. So, there is a continuing interesting conversation that says – we remind you that we see science as a part of people’s cultural lives, that we see engagement with the natural world as a part of people’s cultural experience. (Interview G2.02)

At the British Library, an interviewee explained how the Library has worked to try and smooth over the gap between its cultural and research priorities while forming its strategic purposes, which are defined in the Library’s strategy Living Knowledge (2015) -

... there was a sense that the purposes were meant to span the breadth of what we did.

... Research also was clarified to make it much clearer that it wasn't just about academic research. It is also about supporting and stimulating research of all kinds. So, maybe broader than the traditional theme, and also reaching out beyond those who are in formal academic roles or doing formal study.
... research is absolutely one of the key aims, one of the key supporting pillars of that. And so, the idea of re-scoping of what the research purpose was about was making sure that we captured and referenced changing trends like open data and new ways of working, new ways of how researchers wanted to engage with us.

...So, the purposes in their own right span what we do, but they are not a hierarchy. So, yes, we have new and distinct purposes around culture and learning, but they are not instead of research, and they are not either/or. They are meant to complement what we do for different audiences.

...It feels to me like things are less siloed and that perhaps the BL is looking across its purposes more than maybe just being primarily a research institution... I do genuinely feel that research hasn't been downgraded in the BL at all. In fact, in some ways it's been augmented because it's absolutely key to delivering other purposes. We would not have cultural content if researchers aren't examining and looking after our stuff. (Interview G2.03)

Finding more harmonious policy frameworks for its different functions appears to be an advancement on a previous situation of unresolved tensions, and it could have a major positive impact by enabling institutions to achieve more balanced strategies, less siloed working, and much better impact of both research and cultural activities. However, these trends on the corporate strategic level have not quite caught up with the reality and challenges faced by staff. One of the issues, especially prominent at the British Library, is that the absence of more detailed strategic frameworks for academic research and the weaknesses in support for staff undertaking academic research (Interviews G1.01; G1.03), do make it sound and feel like research functions are being watered down in practice, even if this was not an intention.
On a strategic level, it is a big win to find a way to explain and link different sides of the institutions by being open to ‘research of all kinds’ rather than only academic research (Interview G2.03). Image 6 shows how this strategy has been translated by the Library’s marketing team into an attractive message aiming to validate different types of research done by different types of Library users. In practice, however, research functions that are supporting academic research specifically, or that include staff undertaking research that is equivalent of academic research, require specialist support and infrastructure. ‘Research of all kinds’ sounds great, but in reality different types of research require different practical solutions. One of the Library’s research-active curatorial staff expressed their sense of frustration as follows -

I mean, [research is] one of the purposes … in all that strategic and public presentational sense, it is right up there with collections and everything else. I think the interesting thing about research is - once
you unpick it, it becomes a lot of different things that are sort of smooshed together. So, research is that we facilitate lots and lots of research every day in the building and off site… If what you’re talking about is research, as in staff in all areas doing research that relates to or is of benefit to BL, I think that’s gaining in profile, but I think there’s a lot more talk about it being important than real tangible support to enable it to happen. So, the talk is bigger than the actual action and support, and that’s because there’s an aspiration that the institution is trying to expand what it does in terms of research, but I think it talks a lot more. (Interview G1.03)

Another issue, especially prominent at the Natural History Museum, is that, while its strategic thinking is making closer links between science and culture, the implementation of these links remains challenging, especially in the institution that, as we have already seen, deployed the organisational model that has structurally split these two functions. This means that some scientists have a desire to contribute more to the Museum’s public programmes, but often feel excluded (Interview G1.02).

Regardless of these challenges, it is evident that the UK national cultural organisations are continuing to develop their research functions and are doing it in quite ambitious ways. The emerging research strategies and models have a potential to reshape these institutions in the future. At the British Library we can see it through its recent partnership with the Alan Turing Institute, the UK’s national AI and data science institute, as explained by an interviewee from the British Library -

I think, that the arrival of the Alan Turing Institute here was a really positive sign about how we seem to be influential and also innovative, and underpinning things. So, I think it’s really great that the institute for data science is here in the national library. That was not necessarily a given. It shows how we can work collaboratively with universities and then, you know, it references our convening power.

…The ATI obviously isn’t a DCMS priority, it’s very much more cross-cutting than that. It was announced by Osborne himself and the
Treasury. And it plays into the UK’s narrative on the world stage. It obviously supports Business, Innovation and Skills particularly, but not exclusively. (Interview G2.03)

This partnership is linked to the British Library’s need to develop better understanding and services that can utilise data science to expand research of its vast digital collections. Equally significant are the Library’s future plans for the major new building developments at St Pancras, which include the plans for the future growth of the Alan Turing Institute -

At present, the Institute’s staff are mainly based on the first floor of the existing Library building, but a key element of the programme to transform the St Pancras site will be to build a permanent home for the Alan Turing Institute as part of the development of our campus. (BL 2018b:15)

In a similar vein, there are some new and ambitious developments linked to the Natural History Museum’s research functions. In 2020 the Chancellor of Exchequer announced £180 million government investment for the new Natural History Museum scientific facility, initially to be based on the UK science campus in Harwell, but since relocated to Thames Valley Science Park in Shinfield, Wokingham (UKSPA 2020; University of Reading 2022). It is envisaged that this new development will be ‘a gateway to the natural world, dedicated to widening access to vital scientific information and developing novel analytical technologies to understand changing natural diversity’ (NHM n.d.).

The British Museum’s building and storage plans, also at Thames Valley Science Park in partnership with University of Reading, have similar characteristics. This development will secure a partial replacement for the Museum’s facilities at Blythe House in London, which is due to close in 2023. The new development, however, is described as a research facility –

The new development will not be a second British Museum, but it will be an active and integral part of the organisation and its focus on global research. Study rooms will give university students, academics and members of the public access to the collection. (BM n.d. a.)
This trend of large developments that are described as new, state of the art research facilities, is also present elsewhere in the sector. For example, V&A East development at the Olympic Park also provides ‘a new approach to stored or reserved collections’ (Interview G3.03) -

*The Storehouse’s programme will explore why objects are collected, how they are cared for, conserved and displayed and will reveal the latest research emerging from the collections. (V&A n.d.)*

This trend is not surprising if we take into account the planned UK investment in research infrastructure, which is a major part of the UK government’s commitment to raise the overall investment in research and development (BEIS 2017; UKRI 2022a). It will be interesting to see how these developments might influence the future of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.
4.5 Benefits and impact of research activity

4.5.1 Public value

Even with the strong sense of professionalisation of research functions in the mould of university research, there remains a strong sense that research conducted in cultural organisations is different to research conducted in universities (see Appendix D, page 533). One difference that was almost universally pointed out by the interviewees is that this research is primarily collection-based, even if in the broadest sense of the word. This principle remains of equal importance to a space scientist in the Natural History Museum (Interview G1.02), an archaeologist at the British Museum (Interview G1.05), and a data scientist at the British Library (Interview G1.01). Another unique feature perceived by almost everyone was a sense of public purpose of such research, either through informing exhibition interpretation and education programmes, or through providing information that can deepen public understanding of objects and their context, or through improving collection access and preservation.

While being very aware of the impact agenda as defined by the UK research funders and being ready to emphasise it, especially when seeking external funding, the primary sense of public purpose and value expressed by the interviewees was not strongly related to impact in the sense of the current research policy agenda, or even to any other direct government or funding mandated policy. Instead, it appears to be linked to a more direct sense of institutional purposes, mission and values, such as in this example regarding research to advance digital preservation at the British Library -

… well, we can take some of the digital preservation work as examples. So, in the digital preservation setting we believe that there is a strong societal benefit in being able to ensure that the content that is produced today, that is all digital, will be usable in the future. Because if not, then, we as an institution are incapable of delivering our core mission. And we believe that there is a societal value in that
In some instances, the collections themselves were seen as an expression of public benefit, and research benefit meant benefiting collections. One interviewee expressed it as follows -

*Well, I would go as far as to say that the key responsibility of the Museum is its care of the collection, so that it is available for public benefit. So, the collection only exists for the use of curious and interested persons, therefore the only way, according to our charitable purpose, in which we can even do research is if it actually supports the care and public benefit of the collection.* (Interview G2.01)

A different interviewee expressed it in more practical terms –

*... [we are] quite keen to ensure that there’s a benefit to our collection. So, I’m working on very early pottery from [another part of the world] and… we have nothing in that [part of the world]. So, I have to collaborate with other museums, but the techniques that I’m developing, the ways in which we’re generating data, can be very useful to apply to our collections in other parts of the world, and in another archaeological and historic context.* (Interview G1.06)

### 4.5.2 Research policy and impact agenda

While the value of research to institutional missions and collections was strongly held by the interviewees, their understanding of benefits and impact of research activity was also influenced by the impact agenda deployed by the UK research funders. The interviewees for this study were aware of the UK research funders’ impact policies and the way in which they translated into new funding and collaboration opportunities for the UK national cultural organisations. In particular, the interviewees often emphasised that public engagement is an important part of their role and institutional raison d’etre. The UK research impact policies were seen as an area of useful alignment with institutional missions and their existing activity. The UK research funders’
impact agenda was also strongly related to the interviewees’ interactions with universities, and it was evident that impact was re-shaping institutional relationships with universities. One interviewee described it as follows -

... but the interesting challenge for heritage organisations is that the academia is getting very overexcited about the impact agenda. A lot of them hate it and some people are deliberately trying to avoid it, but heritage organisations have been doing this forever and know how to do it, and there is something slightly annoying about having to continually fend off academics who want to have a conference at the British Library and having to explain to them that impact doesn't just look like conferences at the British Library. (Interview G1.03)

The annoyance with the chasers of impact from academic institutions was high across the board, but it was balanced by the realisation that this also leads to useful collaboration opportunities. The same interviewee from the British Library said -

... we can get involved in projects that do really interesting work and bring expertise into the Library that we don't otherwise have, and we can be experts on some of the impact activity, so it can be really positive, and it has pushed universities and heritage organisations closer together, and when the partnerships work well, they're really good partnerships. (Interview G1.03)

The majority was certain that, when it comes to benefits and impact, the institutions were in strong position to deliver, but they were also aware that these types of policies are transitory, and that the expectations will continue to change.

When it comes to public engagement, we are in quite good position. But again, we need to continue to evolve. So, if you talk to the Research Councils, and you say – right, for our public engagement activity, we are going to put out a stall in the Museum and someone is going to stand on it and talk. And they say – you did it the last time. So, there is a pressure, good pressure, from the Wellcome, from the Research Councils, which is saying – ‘Ok, we want to continue to see
this move’. So, where the public are now, where they are going to be in five-year’s time, and what are you going to do to actually achieve it? So, there is a pressure on us to continue to experiment with that. (Interview G2.02)

The interviewees were aware that the alignment with the research impact agenda presented them with new funding opportunities and were actively taking advantage of this situation, but many have also expressed a level of caution about being in it just for money -

So, it can be really useful and it especially can be useful for getting money, but if you chase that, and if you just do what the government framework says then you’re probably going to end up with a bit of a scattergun approach to research, and research should still be driven by what the most important questions to answer are, rather than what somebody will give you money to answer. (Interview G1.03)

The interviewees provided multiple examples of how their work achieved economic and social benefits, including specific benefits in the areas such as health and climate change (Interviews G1.01; G1.04). For the Natural History Museum, the entire organisational strategy was aligned with climate emergency, biodiversity and environmental benefits (Interviews G1.04; G2.02). Several interviewees mentioned their contribution to educational outcomes for young people (Interviews G2.03; G3.04). One interviewee perceived a bigger opportunity for ‘a more joined up approach to the use of museums as places of education from pre-school to post-doc and beyond’ (Interview G3.03).

4.5.3 Greater integration of public and research functions

In terms of any concerns that the wide-ranging public benefits could dilute institutional research missions, and especially in comparison with the urgency and strong feelings accompanying the way in which these concerns were expressed in the 1990s and early 2000s (Wilson 1989; Anderson 2005), the interviews for this study did not note this as a strong concern. Some
interviewees expressed an awareness of the continuing shift in institutional priorities towards public visitors – for example, one interviewee described the situation in the botanic garden research environment and the erosion of research values as follows –

*What we’re seeing over time is an erosion of those values and particularly given that most botanic gardens are public funded, with cuts for public funding, a shift to bringing in visitors for example. So having orchid festivals or light shows at Christmas, more ornamental horticulture as opposed to a science based and specialist horticulture. So, I think that’s a general trend around the world… (Interview G3.02)*

A dominant trend amongst the interviewees was that, even when perceiving some of the tensions with the greater emphasis on visible public benefits, they advocated for a more integrated view, where research functions were utilised to advocate for societal change, and where the institutions were embracing their potential to advance public engagement. This was also visible in the institutional practice, where we can see, for example, that the AHRC funding underpins research for exhibitions, such as *The Real Tudors: Kings and Queens Rediscovered* at the National Portrait Gallery and *Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave* at the British Museum (AHRC 2017:15,31). This meant that different institutional functions were seen as contributing to the same goal, as in this example from the British Museum, explaining the growing alignment between research and exhibitions -

*For the first five years of our Research Strategy, another challenge was what was distinction between research and exhibition work because they have different processes. So, exhibition has its own process, which I don’t have anything to do with. And that has led to an unhelpful distinction that somehow there was research, pure research here, and that there was exhibitions and new galleries there. But that has changed. We basically acknowledge that all of these are research activities. An exhibition or new gallery requires research, and as we increasingly start to blur distinction between a research project and an exhibition project. (Interview G2.01)*
The example below from the Natural History Museum further explores this trend towards integrating different institutional functions. It also shows understanding of research functions on a deeper level which is seeking to achieve long-term societal and environmental change.

There is a functionalistic, anti-intellectual attitude that creeps into our society, and we have to be aware of the fact that there are 400,000 species of [these organisms], probably one or two thousand of those are agricultural pests, or factors in plant diseases or biological control agents that we can use and a large number of those are minding their own business in natural habitats and not doing any harm or any good. And there is a philosophy that such things are not relevant to progress and that which is not of medical importance, or ecological, environmental, agricultural importance, is not interesting. And there are discoveries that are being made that are of cultural interest, there are discoveries that are being made that are of accidental scientific interest. You know, what we are basically arguing is a need for research and a need for science, a need for a deeper understanding of the world and how the world works, and also there is an urgency for all of this because these natural habitats are disappearing. Human population is growing, human consumption of natural resources is increasing, and very often a native forest or a piece of habitat might be regarded as wasteland, or unused land. That is very much a conventional view. And, I think, gradually, because of the efforts that people like museums are making, the larger and larger part of population is not thinking of tropical forest as an underdeveloped wasteland, but potentially as something that should be valued culturally. And I just think reaching out to the public and explaining what we’re doing is a very important thing and a part of what we are doing. (Interview G1.04)

The interviews show that the impact agenda developed in the UK research and science sectors has made a difference to the institutions. First, on the very practical level by bringing in new funding and new collaboration opportunities, as well as by creating new opportunities to link institutional
research and public functions. At the same time, the institutions are remaining aware of their own context and its multiple requirements, and they seem to have developed more sophisticated ways to connect different areas of their work than it was the case in the 1990s, ensuring that different functions are more mutually supporting. While it was always acknowledged that research is essential to produce high quality exhibitions and other public-facing activities, what is different now is a new level of recognition that the interconnection of research-led and public-led processes can lead to unique and distinct societal benefits.

The need to show societal and economic benefits and impact was seen as integral to all institutional work including research. Not only that this was not considered to be instrumentalist by the interviewees as it was the case in the previous decades (Anderson 2007), but the interviewees also expressed a conviction that this is an area of the sector’s unique expertise (Interviews G1.03; G1.05). The greater attention paid to societal and economic impacts of research appears to have reduced a level of friction which existed in the previous decades between different institutional functions, including their prioritisation and intended benefits. This has not, however, removed the concern that research does not sit well within the broader cultural policy and the organisational governmental environment, as already mentioned, and as we will further explore in Chapter 5 (see page 173).
4.6 Conclusion

Research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, and more broadly in GLAM organisations, form a distinct research grouping within the broader research ecosystem. The sector experienced a sense of crisis in relation to its research at the end of 1990s and in the early 2000s, which manifested itself in the often-polarised debates about the role of research within GLAM organisations (Lucas et al. ed. 1990). This led to the loss of research capacity at the time – for example, through a loss of curatorial roles through redundancies (Gee 1990a). The state of research functions in museums in this period was captured in Lifting the Veil report, including issues such as lack of funding and change in the nature of curatorial roles (Gunn & Prescott 1999).

This study shows that many echoes of these discussions are still present in the sector, not the least the continuing perceptions of elitism, siloed working, and the continuing uncertainty felt by research-active staff regarding legitimacy of research in the institutions (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.03). However, this study also uncovered some significant changes in relation to the situation in the 1990s and early 2000s, including –

- That research functions in the UK national cultural organisations appear to be better funded and more formally structured than they were in the past, including a range of specialist staff and departments that supports research.
- That the models of research have moved towards predominantly externally funded, time-bound projects, led by specific research questions.
- That availability of funding is not perceived as a major issue, but that there are persistent problems of under-resourcing and inadequate practical institutional support to apply for funding and to manage research projects.
• That research collaborations are thriving, especially collaborations with universities, and that these collaborations are often motivated by the UK research funders’ impact agenda.

• That research is well represented in the institutional strategies and forward planning and that research continues to be strongly linked to institutional governance.

• That directors and trustees continue to play key role in defining institutional research functions and direction of travel in this area, and that this is especially significant in relation to maintaining strategic importance of research and advocacy with relevant parts of government.

• That the institutions are finding new ways to link fragmented governmental policy and are attempting to harmonise research and cultural policy in the ways that were previously absent.

• That individuals and institutions are moving towards more integrated understanding of different institutional functions, with more harmonious and closer alignment of public-facing and research functions. However, cross-organisational collaborations often remain difficult in practice due to internal silos.

• That institutional forward planning includes a range of ambitious and potentially transformative research plans, especially where the institutions are growing their physical presence and developing new spaces aligned with their research priorities.

These findings expand our knowledge of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

One hypothesis of this study is that institutional governance plays significant part in the way in which research functions develop in cultural organisations, especially due to the way in which institutions chose to react to the pressures created by governmental policy, funding, or other external and internal events. In this Chapter we have seen that the UK national cultural organisations recognise their research functions as distinctive to their other functions. The institutional governance and strategies describe research functions alongside their primary focus on collections, and alongside their
focus on multiple types of users. This research is often there to underpin this public offer. The inclusion of research in the organisational strategies shows that the UK national cultural organisations undertake research on their own terms, in line with their own unique missions, needs and expertise. We can also see the continuing involvement of directors and trustees in shaping institutional research functions. In this respect, the findings of this Chapter validate the first part of the initial hypothesis that institutional governance is significant for research functions. The second part, which is related to government policy and funding, is further investigated in the next Chapter. These findings form a significant new contribution to knowledge in regard to key changes that have taken place in regard to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations in the second part of the 20th and first decades of the 21st century.
5 UK national cultural organisations within the machinery of government

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates how the UK national cultural organisations fit with the UK machinery of government, and how this relationship has changed over time. The intent is to broaden our understanding of relationships between the UK national cultural organisations and government, as well as key changes in relevant policy trends. This will provide insight relevant for three research questions asked in this study about the nature of interactions between national cultural organisations and the government over time, the impact of key changes in the UK science and cultural policies, and any policy tensions that might be arising in relation to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

This chapter also investigates the interaction between institutional governance and governmental actors, further contributing to our hypothesis that institutional governance plays significant part in the way in which research functions develop in the UK national cultural organisations, especially due to the way in which institutions react to the pressures created by governmental policy and funding.

In addition, this chapter enables us to see how, over time, the UK national cultural institutions have moved further away from the parts of government responsible for research and science towards the parts of government responsible for culture. The chapter also investigates the long-term impacts of policy fragmentation within the machinery of government. This supports our second hypothesis which is that the on-going fragmentation of the UK cultural and science policies negatively affects research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, and that institutional strategies and behaviours in the UK national cultural organisations show a gradual move from research-led to culture-led policy and strategic drivers.
5.2 Changing governmental remits and the UK national cultural organisations in the post-war period

5.2.1 Central government departments

The existing literature rarely describes the structural position and functioning of the UK national cultural organisations within the UK government (for some exceptions see Clarke 1991; Policy Studies Institute 1990 &1993, Selwood ed. 2001). The existing literature often considers specific policy directions that defined different governements and their cultural policies, such as the commercialisation policies under Thatcher’s Conservative government (Frey & Pommerhne 1989; Bradley 1998), or the policies of inclusion and social regeneration under Blair’s Labour government (West & Smith 2005; Gibson 2008; Hesmondhaigh et. al. 2015). What is almost never studied is the mechanics of how government works and how the machinery of government integrates the UK national cultural organisations. Consequently, we have relatively little understanding of how these organisations sit within the machinery of government and how this position has changed over time. At the time of writing, the UK national cultural organisations are classed as non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) or arms-length bodies (ALBs), sponsored by DCMS –

*Their directors are designated as chief accounting officers. This means that ALBs [arms-length bodies] make independent funding decisions within a remit set by ministers, who are ultimately accountable to Parliament and to the public for such spending. Remits are formalised in management agreements between ministers and ALBs. Management agreements set out the amount of government (“grant in aid” (GiA)) funding each will receive, the government’s priorities and expectations for how this money should be spent, and the performance indicators by which each will be assessed by DCMS. (DCMS 2017a: 15-16)*

While the mechanisms of funding changed over time, the funds were coming mostly from the public purse throughout the post-war period. The
report about the UK national museums published by the Museums & Galleries Commissions of the United Kingdom in 1988 specified that –

*A hallmark of a national museum has always been its funding by the Exchequer. Whether vested in Trustees at the outset (as with the British Museum) or originally set up as a departmental museum (as with the Science Museum), the Government assumed full funding responsibility. (MGC 1988: 3)*

The relationship between the UK government and the national cultural organisations predates the development of the post-war government departments. From the Act of the purchase of the Museum or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane and of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts in 1753 (Act of Parliament 1753), to the Select Committee Inquiry and purchase of Elgin marbles in 1816 (Woodhouse & Pepin 2017: 3), or the celebration of the imperial industrial and technological might through the Great Exhibition in 1851 and the subsequent opening of the South Kensington Museum in 1857 (Burrett 1982: 2; Burton 1999: 41; V&A 2013b: 7-11) - the UK national cultural organisations have been and remain an indivisible part of the British state. Even with the involvement of private collectors and many different funding models over time, from direct governmental funding to public lotteries and subscriptions, it was the state that made decisions and legislated to establish these collections as public collections.

The relationship between the British state and the UK national cultural organisations goes far beyond policy priorities of any individual government. In the language of the 1980s –

*… they reflect the nation’s place in the history of civilisation. They are part of the nation’s patrimony, to be used and enjoyed and built upon now, and to be sustained for the future. (MGC 1988: 4)*

The terms such as government-sponsored institutions, arms-length bodies, and non-departmental public bodies, aim to show a level of separation between the government and the governance of the UK national cultural organisations (DCMS 2017a). And while a level of separation does exist, we must not overstate it. Any account of the UK national cultural institutions
without a study of their relationship with, or sometimes their position within the UK government, would mean leaving out one of their key characteristics (Pearson 1982; Selwood 2001). Often, this relationship is centred around the issue of funding. As Selwood explains –

_Policies theoretically influence funding decisions, which affect the kind of grants made available, which in turn shape the nature and output of subsidised organisations. (Selwood 2001: 1)_

In addition to administrative and funding links, we also find a range of links between institutions and government officials on individual level. For example, we can look at the journeys of David Eccles, from Paymaster General and Minister of Arts to Chair of the British Museum and the British Library (Wilson 2002: 276), Tessa Blackstone from Minister of Arts to Chair of the British Library (DCMS 2003; BL 2015), and, recently, George Osborne, from Chancellor of Exchequer to Chair of the British Museum (Ruiz 2022).

Image 7 - George Osborne, Chancellor of Exchequer 2010-16. Launching Knowledge Quarter at the British Library in December 2014. © British Library Board

The links between the government and the UK national institutions exist on many different levels – from the way in which these institutions act as a symbolic embodiment of the state and nationhood (MGC 1988; Gascoigne
2019), to formal policy, funding, and reporting arrangements (Selwood 2001),
all the way to a range of significant individual relationships with politicians and
civil servants (Strong 1997; Wilson 2002). The frequent unwillingness by the
government to provide sufficient funds for the institutions must not be mistaken
for a distance in relationship or a lack of governmental direction for institutions
(Edwards unpublished 1996). For example, the letters announcing austerity
cuts in the 2010s came with both the news of the cuts and the list of areas
where there was an expectations for the institutions to continue to deliver in
response to the government’s policy agendas (DCMS archival 2010 & 2013).
If anything, the scarcity of funding, as the sector discovered during George
Osborne’s austerity budgets, means an even greater need to justify
institutional spend and to fit as closely as possible with the government’s
priorities (BL 2020; Interviews G2.02; G2.03).

Another difficulty in understanding the relationship of the UK national
cultural organisations with the government is that it cannot be described as a
simple relationship between institutions and their ‘home’ department. In our
time, as well as historically, the UK national cultural organisations have
maintained a set of relationships across government departments, including
involvement with policy landscape that is much broader than that of their
‘home’ department (DCMS, DIUS & BERR 2008 archival; Interviews G2.01,
G2.02).

If we look over 80+ year period from 1940 to 2022, we find that the
institutions were linked with many different parts of government, and, at any
given time, with more than one part of government. The relationship is further
complicated by a range of changing governmental arms-length bodies, which
have had different types of influence over the UK national cultural
organisations. Figure 8 presents the successive central government
departments relevant for the UK national cultural organisations, separated in
five columns according to their remit. Figure 8 has been developed by
combining a range of published and archival sources that tell us about the
structure of UK government over time (Act of Parliament 1963, 1964, 1972,
Figure 8 covers:

- Treasury with its overall funding remit.
- A range of departments with the responsibility for historic buildings, built heritage and natural environment.
- Successive education departments.
- Governmental bodies with responsibility for science and research.
- Government departments for culture, heritage, and the arts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National government 1940-2022, departments with remit and relevance for the UK national cultural organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Treasury - direct grant to the UK national cultural organisations, apart from the departmental museums</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Ministry of Works (in existence from 1851) - responsibility for heritage until 1962</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>Ministry of Education - responsibility of the departmental museums - V&amp;A and Science Museum</td>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) - in existence from 1915</td>
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<td>2022</td>
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Treasury - indirect influencing, direct participation in one off large investments and initiatives, other direct links with national institutions

Department for Environment - heritage responsibilities moved to the DNH

Department for Education - museum, libraries and the arts responsibilities moved to the DNH

Cabinet Office, Office of Science and Technology (merged with Science from DES)

Department of National Heritage, first Ministry for arts, museums, libraries, heritage, media, sport and tourism

Department of Trade and Industry (science moves in from the Cabinet Office)

Department for Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS) and Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) - 2007-2009

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) - 2009 - 2016.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

Figure 8 - Government departments with remits for the UK national cultural organisations and related functions 1940-2022
Figure 8 simplifies the actual situation as it excludes the direct relationships with the Prime Minister's Office and Number 10, as well as with the Foreign Office and a range of bodies dealing with international relations and trade (Interview G2.01; G2.02). Also, Figure 8 does not show internal departmental changes over time – for example, between university, science and cultural remits within the Department of Education and Science (1964-1992) (NHM933/80 archival). It also does not show a range of policy changes in this department during a long period of its existence that included three Conservative and two Labour governments (Strong 1997; Burton 1999). This dynamic process of change continues with the most recent split of BEIS in 2003 to Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, Department of Science Innovation and Technology, and Department of Business and Trade. At the same time DCMS has lost its digital remit, reverting to its pre 2017 remits (Dunton 2023). This creates an immediate issue for the GLAM organisations, but also the broader cultural, information and broadcasting sectors in relation to their continuing digital transformation, especially the new challenges posed by AI technologies.

The position of the institutions across these separate layers of government, shown in Figure 8, has never been a clear cut. For example, in the immediate post-war period a number of the UK national cultural organisations, such as the British Museum, received their grant directly from the Treasury (Kehoe 2002: 9,25), but they also had many other governmental relationships (Wilson 2002: 217-8, 257, 276). The buildings were maintained and managed by the Ministry of Works, and subsequently the Property Services Agency, the UK government departments dealing with buildings, and these relationships persisted until 1988 (Wilson 1989: 80). Equally, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) had links with museums via the emerging field of heritage science. DSIR provided initial funding and enabled employment of the first heritage scientists in the British Museum from 1919 to 1931, and subsequently DSIR stayed involved with key developments in heritage science as a part of their scientific remit across government (Plenderleith 1989: 130, TNA DSIR 36/3558 archival). In addition, the Museum had a link with a range of advisory bodies operating at this time,
such as the Standing Commission on Arts and Galleries and the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (Royal Commission 1928; Act of Parliament 1979; Clarke 1991: 274).

Some parts of the national collection had their own extraordinary journeys across government, sometimes originating in the government departments, but ending up being integrated in the UK national cultural organisations. For example, the former Geological Museum started its life within the DSIR, moving to the care of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) within the Department of Education and Science, eventually being integrated to the Natural History Museum in the 1980s (TNA ED 273/97 archival). The British Library integrated many of its current collections and departments from different central government departments, such as the National Lending Library for Science and Technology from the DSIR in 1973 (Day 1995: 140; de Figuerido 2018: 14 unpublished), and the India Office Records from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1982 (Moir 1988: xiii).

Meanwhile, the so-called departmental museums, such as V&A and the Science Museum, experienced an even closer governmental involvement, as they were run from within the Ministry of Education, and subsequently the Department of Education and Science (DES), which was formed in 1965 (Burrett 1982: 1; Bruton 1999: 229-230). At this point the overall national remit for museums, galleries, libraries, and the arts moved to the Department for Education and Science (Clarke 1991: 275). Thus, for one and only time, science and GLAM were united in the same government department. However, this was not as straightforward as it appears at first, as these areas remained quite separate within this large and complex department, with the GLAM brief fitting within the Office of Arts and Libraries, which operated with various level of independence from the department during this period (Clarke 1991: 277). Different national institutions had very different experience of the Department of Education and Science during this period, and not always a very positive one. Roy Strong tells us of his long-term battle against the DES grant-in-aid cuts and his attempts to change V&A status from a departmental museum to a trustee-run and more independent institution (Strong 1997: 184-209; Burton 1999: 229). The Natural History Museum moved to the Office of
Arts and Libraries as their ‘home’ department only in 1987. This was due to its strong alignment with the science parts of the DES, while science specialisms did not exist in the Office of Arts and Libraries (Clarke 1991: 277).

In 1992, when the Department of National Heritage (DNH) was formed, governmental heritage and cultural remits were unified in a dedicated government department (Selwood 2001: 2; Coupe 2001: 6). This continued when DNH was changed into DCMS in 1997 (Selwood 2001: 2; Coupe 2001: 6). But inevitably, this meant that many other institutional remits, most of all science and research, remained in different parts of government (Dunlop & Selwood 2001: 45, 50). The feeling of falling in between different government departments and sitting uncomfortably within government, because no single part of it represents all their organisational purposes and functions, is an enduring theme for the UK national cultural organisations (House of Commons 2003; House of Commons 2015a&b). This situation occasionally came to a point where there were attempts to change an institution’s ‘home’ department. As early as the 1920s, we find the Science Museum lobbying to move from the Board of Education to the DSIR because of its stronger science remit (TNA DSIR 17/129). Anecdotally, a similar situation existed relatively recently with a number of institutions attempting to move from DCMS to DIUS during 2010s. While this study did not identify any records to verify these conversations, we will see that the British Library grant-in-aid agreements in this period include the split of functions across three departments (DCSM, DIUS & BERR 2008 archival), which is further discussed in the case study in Chapter 7 (see page 288). This lack of departmental fit does not apply only to the institutional position with DCMS. For example, one interviewee with botanical garden background, described for this study the following experience in relation to the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew fit within Defra -

*That was always the perception that being under DCMS or whatever was easier than being under Defra, partly because Defra had so many different iterations. But also, Kew was never a good fit. So, you know, your equivalents elsewhere, like Edinburgh and so on, come under museums, not under environment. And I think that's where the arboreta also struggle in a sense, particularly now that they're not*
under science. They should be. ... Well, I think part of the problem is that all of our government departments now have a pretty parochial agenda, particularly Defra. So, the international part is minuscule and that's really where Kew would fit. And certainly, where it fits on international policy and so on. And, you know, there are other agencies that can cover the UK angle. Like the Environment Agency and like Natural England, and so on. ...So, Kew was never going to be a good fit for the Department of Environment, it was very much around British farming and food. You know, that's a bit of a stretch. (Interview G3.02)

When it comes to their position within the machinery of government, for what is a relatively small sub-sector of UK culture and research, we find a picture of substantial complexity, not made easier but the fact that these complex relationships are rarely acknowledged and discussed despite their crucial importance for the way in which this sector is developing. Where similar situations exist in other sectors, there is usually an attempt to discuss and harmonise relevant policies. For example, universities currently deal with the split of their student and research remits across UKRI and OfS, but there is a dialogue and a policy attempt to deal with this split (OfS 2018). There is no such discussion related to the UK national cultural organisations.
5.2.2 Arms-length bodies

Pearson (1982: 56) describes the UK governmental arms-length bodies as a central part of the British state, while also underlining the ambiguity of relationships between different parts of government. Following the model used for the central government departments, Figure 9 presents a range of arms-length bodies which were in different ways relevant for the UK national cultural organisations, segmenting them into –

- Arms-length bodies with direct remit for GLAM.
- Arts arms-length bodies.
- Heritage arms-length bodies.
- Research councils; and
- University related arms-length bodies.

Figure 9 has been developed by using a range of published and archival sources that tell us about the structure of UK government or different arms-length bodies over time (ACE 2020; AHRC 2017; CEBR 2013; Clark 2004; Clarke 1991; DCMS 2014, 2016b; HEFCE 2014a,b,c; Historic England 2015, 2016a, 2017c; KCL 2016; Kenyon 1927, 1952; Libraries Taskforce 2016; MGC 1988, 1993; MLA 2012; Museums Association 2017; Research England 2019; Rivington 2018; Selwood 2001; UGC 1967; UKRI 2020a&b). These arms-length bodies sometimes act as funding bodies, sometimes as policy makers, sometimes as advisers, sometimes as bodies implementing governmental policies, or they might undertake several of these functions at the same time. This ambiguity of roles applies both in arts and in sciences, further adding to the complexity of relationships between government and the UK national cultural organisations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Museum, galleries and libraries</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>Research Councils</th>
<th>University funding bodies</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries - set up in 1931, advice to national government on museum policy</td>
<td>Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA)</td>
<td></td>
<td>All part of DSIR</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Given responsibility to grant aid to national museums in 1983</td>
<td>Arts Council of Great Britain</td>
<td>Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments - England, Scotland and Wales from 1908 (Merged with English Heritage in 1999 and in 2015 with the Historic Environment Scotland)</td>
<td>National Research Development Corporation in 1949</td>
<td>Universities Grant Committee, in existence from 1919</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Standing Museums and Galleries Commission (SMGC), given Royal Charter in 1987</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Libraries and information Commission in existence from 1995</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>2000 Re-Source - MSC merged with Library and Information Committee</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales get a Royal Charter and new devolved status in 1994 Creative Scotland from 2010.</td>
<td>Scottish Arts Council</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Historic England</td>
<td>Scottish Heritage</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Historic Environment Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland</td>
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**Figure 9 - Arms-length bodies relevant for the UK national cultural organisations 1940-2022**
5.2.3 Arms-length bodies in culture and the arts

The governmental administrative and funding oversight of the UK national cultural organisations from DCMS, as well as such previous oversight from the central government, either via the Department of National of Heritage or the Department for Education and Science, was preceded by the variety of arms-length and advisory types of relationships, such as via the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries formed in 1931 and renamed into the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) in 1981 (TNA 2009). Following the recommendations of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, MGC was formed to review and make recommendation in relation to institutional finances and development, promote co-ordination between institutions, and stimulate generosity of potential public benefactors (House of Commons 1929: 15-16). It was recommended that –

*Such a body would have no executive power and therefore would not override or interfere with the existing Trustee and Departmental authorities. It would affect the desired end of co-ordination and greater unity of effort through its central position and prestige. Its influence would be exerted by way of constructive suggestion, counsel and mediation, not by way of veto, domination and control.* (House of Commons 1929: 16)

It was hoped that this body would aid the growth of national institutions and help avoid ‘a painful history of periods of stagnation alternating with sudden and costly spasms of progress’. (House of Commons 1929: 16)

In 1981 the Commission was renamed into the Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC), incorporated under a Royal Charter in 1987. Over time its responsibilities ranged from giving advice on museum and gallery affairs, promoting their interests, advising institutions, encouraging adoption of best standards, administering a range of grant schemes, etc. In 2000, MGC was combined with the Library and Information Commission to form Re:source, which subsequently became the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (TNA 2009; Policies Studies Institute 1993: 5; Selwood 2001: 1-2; MLA 2012). MLA was abolished in 2012. Its closing report describes the
organisation as -

…the Government’s agency for developing and improving England’s museums, libraries and archives; by providing the sector with strategic leadership, acting as an authoritative advocate and champion, advising stakeholders on best practice and assisting DCMS with the delivery of specific initiatives. (MLA 2012: 4)

MGC, as well as its preceding and successor bodies, are of particular significance for this study because their reporting and research goes furthest in acknowledging the importance of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations alongside other institutional functions (MGC 1988, 1993, 1999; Gunn and Prescott 1999). Even an early report of the Royal Commission on Museums and Galleries in 1929 recognises ‘distinction between the needs of the student and the needs of the general public’ and that ‘the great Museums and Galleries have in many cases have been built with little regard to the separate needs of the public and of the student’. While emphasising the importance of public access, the report envisages that the collections should be accessed by ‘the researchers and the historians of art, in separate building, which one enters to study as one enters archives’ (House of Commons 1929: 38-39). MGC comprehensive report on the national museums, published in 1988, places scholarship at the top of the list of the distinguishing features of national museums, going as far as to say that if scholarship is absent the institution does not fulfil the criteria for its national status –

They were founded essentially as institutions for education and research (and both the British Museum and the National Gallery were publicly funded several years before any school or university received public funding). They seek to sustain their collections, and to promote the learning based upon them, so as to serve scholars worldwide. For well over 200 years this concept has attracted men and women of high quality into the service of national museums, informed their thinking and dictated their attitudes. These collections are part of the history of ideas, their curators a species of historian. Their scholarship must be of a quality that commands the respect of others working in the field, in universities and elsewhere. Indeed, much of the research
in national museums – for example, the scientific research undertaken by the British Museum (Natural History), and the conservation research undertaken by the British Museum – is essential in the context of university work. Clearly some national museums are better able than others to pursue scholarly research based on their collections, but each should undertake some. Indeed, if any were to fail entirely in this respect, it would ultimately forfeit its claim to be regarded as a national museum.

(Museums & Galleries Commission 1988: 5)

In addition to seeking to define research functions as an obligatory characteristic of a national museum, this report brings to our attention a rising concern regarding the future of research in national museums –

We have been concerned to find that in every national museum, in every field, scholarship and the associated excellence of curatorial standards are perceived as being increasingly under threat. Shortage of money, the downward pressure on staff numbers, the extra time curators need to spend on managerial tasks, and their move to service functions, are seen as combining to erode the time they have for scholarship activities. At a time when increased emphasis is properly given to management and marketing, the crucial importance of research and scholarship in national museums needs to be stressed again. (MGC 1988: 6)

In this instance we see the tensions that will continue to grow and in many of the UK national cultural institutions come to the point of crisis in the 1990s (Edwards unpublished 1996; Gee 1990a&1991; Lucas et. al. 1990). The effects of the long-term post-war underfunding, the Conservative government policies encouraging marketisation of the sector during the 1980s, but also long-term institutional neglect to modernise both its research and public functions will be further explored in the case studies in the Chapters 6 and 8.

In Chapter 4 we have already seen the work that MGC has done to investigate these issues through the Lifting the Veil report (Gunn & Prescott 1999, see Section 4.2, page 103). However, all this emphasis regarding the
central role of research in the national institutions were never translated into the mainstream policies within DES, DNH and DCMS. These central government department always stayed within their separate policy silos of culture, research and education. While the remits of MGC and MLA were limited, these bodies were able to provide more balance to a purely cultural policy landscape and to highlight any research issues specific to the UK national cultural organisations, and present a more integrated view of their different purposes (MGC 1988, 1993, 1999). Since the abolishment of MLA in 2012, during the infamous ‘bonfire of the quangos’ in the early years of the David Cameron’s coalition government and implemented primarily as an austerity cost cutting exercise, in line with the Conservative commitment to achieve smaller state (Heal 2010; MLA 2012), we do not have an equivalent, arms-length policy body that could take more holistic view of the interests and development of the UK national cultural organisations.

5.2.4 Arms-length bodies in higher education and science

The UK science and research arms-length bodies had a significant influence on research functions in the UK national cultural organisations historically and retain this influence today. Historically, for example, we have already mentioned the role that DSIR played in relation to the development of heritage science. In Chapter 7 (page 257), we will look at the role of the DSIR and the Universities Grant Committee (UGC) in the formation of the British Library.

At present, the most important science and research arms-length body for the UK national cultural organisations is UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). In particular, AHRC, one of the UKRI constituent parts, has played a pivotal role in the development of research in the UK national cultural organisations in the last ten years or so by granting them the Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status if they are able to meet its criteria for research quality and capacity (AHRC 2017: 6; UKRI 2021).

The AHRC role is considered in more detail later on in this Chapter (see page 188). While being the most significant research funding body for many
institutions, it is not the only UKRI Research Council that is seen as important by the interviewees for this study, with NERC, EPSRC, ESRC and STFC all being mentioned (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G2.02). The interviewees from the Natural History Museum stressed that NERC is the most significant funder of their scientific research (Interview G2.02).

Higher education funding bodies, such as Research England, previously HEFCE, are also relevant – for example, through their funding for university museums, libraries, and galleries (HEFCE 2016b), or through special projects that involve national institutions, such as the UK Research Reserve, a book de-duplication project between UK university libraries and the British Library (HEFCE 2016a). However, HEFCE / Research England influence is most significant in terms of a far-reaching impact of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), previously Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), on the UK research landscape (HEFCE 2014 a,b,c & 2015). We have already seen that the impact agenda, created by REF and Research Councils’ impact policies, simultaneously stimulates collaboration and creates tensions in relationships between universities and the UK national cultural organisations (see Chapter 4, page 140 and Appendix D, page 533). In addition to a widely held perception in heritage organisations that many universities appear to seek links with heritage organisations only to satisfy REF impact requirements, rather than for any meaningful long-term collaboration (Interview G1.03; G2.01), other issues identified by the interviewees were the issue of over publication stimulated by the REF cycles, and the difficulty of achieving parity between the UK national cultural organisations and universities due to a dominance of REF process in assessing research quality (Interviews G2.01; G2.04). The absence of an equivalent quality system for research produced in the UK national cultural organisations is explained by one of the interviewees as follows -

Well, it was coming on the back of the problems on of the 90s, and the Trustees wanted to know how we know that the research carried on in the Museum is of a high enough level. And I think it was about when the RAE was being introduced. I mean, the problem is, it is very hard to compare the BM or the BL with anything. As I always understood it
the RAE or the REF was always about comparing the department of English in Nottingham with the department of English somewhere else. So, what are you comparing the British Library to? Or the British Museum to? Because we are not like a ‘department of’ or anything like that. And it happens there isn’t a very similar museum, or a library in the country. So, there was a fundamental problem with it... But then, if you move on from that – how are you trying to assess whether an individual is doing research at the same level as people in universities? Again, I thought that one of the things that rightly came out of it is that there is a difference because in universities you can do anything at all, you can do philosophy, or crisp packets, or something, while in the Library or the BM, in a sense, the collection is the beginning. (Interview G2.04)

Interestingly, an interviewee from the AHRC thought that this issue has been resolved through the IRO process –

And I always have to tell ROs [research organisations], which they’re always surprised by, […] the benchmark for becoming an IRO is much higher than it is for an RO. To be an RO, to be a Research Organization funded by the Research Councils, you don't go through any assessment process, providing you receive direct funding for either teaching or research from Higher Education Council, you are automatically entitled to apply for Research Council grants. So, when we go to the IRO process, what is always quite striking … you get that status for five years and then if you don't get an award in that five-year period, you then have to through a process of renewal. … You have to apply for the status in a very strict way compared to any university, that might have never applied to the AHRC for the last ten years but is still able to apply to us at any point. (Interview G4.01)

In all these cases we can see a direct influence of the research and science arms-length bodies and the systems they create on the institutional considerations in relation to their research functions.

As the REF submissions data is openly available (HEFCE 2014c), it is
possible to use this data to corroborate some of the interview insights. First, in relation to the impact agenda, REF data (HEFCE 2014c) confirms that there is a high level of presence of cultural organisation in the REF 2014 impact case studies. The analysis completed by King’s College for HEFCE shows a high representation of museums and curators as beneficiaries of research conducted in universities, with museums featuring in over 300 case studies and curators in over 150 case studies, predominantly within Panel D dealing with arts and humanities (Kings 2015: 43; HEFCE 2014c). Panel D accounted for 1,647 case studies (Kings 2015: 21). While this does not tell us anything about research in cultural organisations per se, it does tell us about their extensive collaboration with universities, especially considering a relatively small size of the museum sector, which is much smaller than other sectors that are listed as prominent users of the REF assessed research. For example, NHS as a much larger sector, operating in an area with much higher level of research investment, accounts for just over 900 REF case studies in 2014, predominantly in Panel A dealing with medical and biological sciences (REF 2014c; Kings 2015: 43). Panel A accounted for 1,621 case studies (Kings 2015: 21). In REF 2014 154 universities submitted 6,975 case studies overall (Kings 2015: 14). An interviewee from Research England, also previously working for HEFCE, described the nature of these interactions in the following way -

So, [GLAM institutions] are clearly part of the impact engagement landscape within universities. And sometimes that is, you know, with what you might call big national institutions. Often, actually, it’s with the big national institutions, so V&A or Natural History Museum or whatever, British Museum. And that’s often of the sort of interaction that you were talking about earlier where there, you know, is a particular exhibition being commissioned, either derived from the research of a researcher in a university or the museum has decided they want to have a big exhibition on and they’ve sourced expertise from the university sector. Both of those occur. But you also see examples where universities are working with their local smaller scale museums and that tends to be much more on the public engagement
side of things. So, it's using both the venue and the expertise of the museum as a way of working with the public. (Interview G4.02)

REF data (2014c) confirms the perception of the interviewees that there is a high level of university interest in collaboration with GLAM institutions and that there is a high level of use of these collaborations within the REF context. REF also accepts exhibitions as a valid research output, which is another significant factor, especially considering the prominent role that exhibitions play within the GLAM research process. REF (2014c) output analysis for the Panel D shows that out of 39,323 outputs submitted by universities to this panel, 1,210 were exhibitions, or 3.09% of the overall submission (HEFCE 2015: 15). An interviewee from the AHRC also emphasised AHRC acceptance 'that the project led by a museum may be more focused on the exhibition as an output, and, actually, as an embodiment of the research questions that have been asked, rather than the whole series of journal articles or a book' (Interview G4.01).

This brief analysis tells us that the UK research and science arms-length bodies have a significant impact on research functions of the UK national cultural organisations. Their policies, processes and funding stimulate different elements of research in the UK national cultural organisations. In addition to the IRO status, the evidence includes the ways in which the UK science and research arms-length bodies stimulate collaborative activities with universities, define research excellence, influence changes in academic publishing, stimulate knowledge exchange activities, and develop research infrastructures. However, as in our previous examples, apart from the IRO status, we currently do not have adequate data and policy to express these manifold links and recognise them as significant for research function in the UK national cultural organisations.
5.3 Policy fragmentation

A high level of fragmentation within government remains an issue for the UK national cultural organisations. During this study, the interviewees from the current arms-length bodies were aware of governmental fragmentation and its effect on the sector and its research functions (Interviews G4.01; G4.02). In the following example, an interviewee from Research England describes how the British Library falls between the cracks in the current system in terms of its recognition as a part of the national research infrastructure -

*I would agree that the British Library is a part of the national research infrastructure. I guess there’s a question about how that language plays with the funder. In that, you know, DCMS may think that its responsibility is not to fund research infrastructure. So, if that’s what the British Library is, then somebody else should be funding it. So, you know, that’s an interesting debate about language. You know, if it’s DCMS that’s funding you, then you’re there because of your cultural value. Which is, in government terms, seen as separate from your research value even though, you know, most people in the business would say culture and research are actually quite hard to tease apart. In government terms they aren’t. There’s a department over here that does research, and there’s a department over there that does culture. (Interview G4.02)*

A very similar view was echoed by an interviewee from the AHRC –

*...I suppose what I’m getting at, and we discuss this quite regularly in our senior management, is our involvement with heritage organisations, our involvement with cultural organisations, kind of falls between two different government departments, because BEIS are very happy for us to do that, because they recognize the research value of what is going on. But in terms of policy, in terms of engagement around direct activities to do with, say, DCMS sponsorship of those organizations, we’re not part of those conversations at all. (Interview G4.01)*

The sense of fragmentation is not only relevant to the position of
individual institutions and their purposes, but it also affects the way in which national policy is made, especially in culture, and in relation to arts and humanities research. The lack of coordination between different parts of government has consequences for how policy is made. An example provided by an interviewee from the AHRC shows the results of fragmentation by describing the input of different governmental bodies into the making of the UK Industrial Strategy (BEIS 2017a). They describe how the AHRC did not know that the Industrial Strategy will include the sector deal for creative industries until it was published (BEIS 2018). The creative sector deal is a government funding package aiming to stimulate growth in creative industries, and as such predicated on the high levels of R&D, including AHRC investment (BEIS 2018). It is, therefore, very surprising to find a lack of cross-departmental working during its development -

...we imagine that's been done through positioning within DCMS talking directly to BEIS or to No. 10 in the drafting of the Strategy. But at the same time as that, we had a bid on the table about creative economy that the DCMS was certainly aware of at a very high level, but then not to find any reference to research in the creative economy as part of that description, just seems to me that there's a bit of a slippage there, that what we are going to end up with is another review of the creative industries led very much from the arts and culture organisation perspective. Potentially. Where is the research dynamic in there? And, you know, that isn't going to happen with the early sector deal that is to be in, let say, life sciences, because it's so obvious that there is a whole team within BEIS that leads on life sciences, that will remain in control of that.

(Interview G4.01)

In this case it is claimed that DCMS did not fully represent the potential of arts and humanities research as an integral part of the cultural and creative economy, and that AHRC was not able to present the case strongly enough to BEIS, which does not have civil servants concerned with culture and the arts. The consequence of this type of fragmentation could be a lower level of R&D investment for creative and cultural industries because DCMS case did not
include AHRC information. Another connected consequence could be a fragmentation of the existing investments between DCMS and BEIS, especially in terms of any larger investments that are sometimes necessary to sustain type of research done in large cultural organisations working with very large physical and digital collections and requiring significant infrastructural investments to enable cutting edge research. If coming from DCMS, such investments might disadvantage research. If coming from BEIS or Research Councils, they might miss vital elements needed to support collection development for the long term.

The issue of insufficient infrastructure investments for research in arts and humanities has been described by an interviewee from Research England, and which, in his view, disproportionately affects arts and humanities –

... if you compare research infrastructure in the humanities to research infrastructure in the sciences it's much more distributed amongst multiple organisations. So, we're funding that little bit, which is very specific, university museums. DCMS is funding other parts of that landscape. Universities are spending some of their discretionary money on funding that landscape. AHRC isn't. Unlike the other Research Councils, it isn't really investing in the infrastructure at all, you know, it has no funding streams that support that. So, it's a much more complicated landscape than it is say, you know, if you're looking at facilities in physics.

(Interview G4.02)

Since the time of this interview, AHRC has accessed additional funding and started investing in infrastructure in arts and humanities (AHRC 2022: 12). However, the fundamental issue of fragmentation, especially when it comes to large infrastructures that require long-term development and investment in the way that integrated research and long-term development of collections, remains. Even if we look at the recent large infrastructure investments, such as the Natural History Museum’s new research and storage facility that is being developed at the University of Reading, we find that these investments tend to be announced in the Budget statements, often without any reference to DCMS, thus indicating much broader organisational influencing and making case for
such investments across the government (NHM n.d. & 2023). Further analysis of the interviews for this study in relation to infrastructure is presented in Appendix D (see page 528).
5.4 Absence of national research policies and remits

The arms-length principle deployed by the government in relation to the UK national cultural organisation is meant to ensure a level of institutional independence (Cabinet Office n.d.). One of the interviewees who worked for DCMS explained –

*Well, in practice I think it was reasonably straightforward. So, the rule was it wasn't government's job to intervene in how the museum ran itself. What exhibitions it chose, what collections it purchased, what research it conducted. All of that was off limits for ministers. Ministers were simply there to celebrate the successes of these institutions as cultural bodies with some of the biggest visitor numbers of any cultural activity in the country, to fight their corner in conversations with the Treasury and to generate… well, to drive whatever changes it felt were necessary to promote the government of the day's objectives. But it didn't at all intervene in decisions about the actual stuff of running the museum. So, you know, it wouldn't be the case that ever we were asked to comment or intervene in an area of research.*

*(Interview G4.03)*

Indeed, DCMS intervening with research functions in the institutions is not an issue that has arisen during the interviews for this study. The issue arising in some of the interviews was just the opposite, claiming that DCMS ignores and is not interested in institutional research functions, which means that research remains unrecognised as one of organisational remits (Interviews G1.01; G1.02). In the example above, the interviewee stresses institutional independence, but they also describe how the government of the day had its own objectives to promote. The same interviewee was aware of this contradiction, and explained it further using the examples of the free admission policy and the Parthenon marbles at the British Museum –

*… the view was, because these are separate charities, the trustees are responsible for everything that happens, ultimately. The government is the principal funder and appoints the trustees. There's a special type of charity called exempt charities, under charity law.*
That is a point of tension because government doesn't normally fund charities or government isn't allowed to be influencing the work of charities, because that's a definite no-no. … So, the tension is most apparent in relation to a policy like free admission … It could equally be something about the Parthenon marbles… But technically, government cannot tell museums what to do because that is government instructing an independent charity on what to do. … I mean, the government doesn't have to say much because the trustees will support it because the trustees know, if they don't support it… The trustees could turn around tomorrow and reverse the free admission policy, but they also know that the DCMS would cut their funding in half. So, they won't do it. (Interview G4.03)

There are many different elements that we could further analyse in this example, not the least in relation to the controversial examples of the free admissions policy and the Parthenon marbles. We could also draw a comparison in relation to today's situation where the policies such as ‘retain and explain’ very directly specify what the institutions are to do in relation to the so-called contested collections (DCSM 2020). However, our focus is on the less prominent and publicised issue of research functions, where the interviewee notes that research functions were not influenced by the government. The same interviewee said –

… in statute, in the Act of Parliament, which includes a research function but there's not huge amounts of detail, and it was very much not the job of the DCMS, whether it's ministers or civil servants, to have any say over the research priorities or the curatorial priorities or… Actually, the view was, because these are separate charities, the trustees are responsible for everything that happens, ultimately. (Interview G4.03)

This view was shared by some interviewees from the institutions (Interviews G2.01; G2.01; G2.04). The interviewees from the Group 2, especially, with managerial responsibilities in the institutions, acknowledged the lack of interest and understanding from DCMS when it comes to research. They held the view that DCMS is not interested in research, but they did not
I don’t think that the Government takes a very close policy interest in policies of the BM. I mean, if they did something stupid, like, you know, close to the public seven days a week, so we can just write research papers, that would be a problem. But my sense is the Government is perfectly intent that the Museum should make its own decisions, and the Library, correctly or incorrectly, about the amount of the resources it gives to different priorities. It is the arms-length principle. (Interview G2.04)

DCMS has never set a KPI about research. We will tell them, and always did, that we have done so many books, that we have published so many articles, that we have brought in money, but there is no, from my perspective, there is no requirement or need for me to do anything specific to send to DCMS about research. It is part and parcel of what museum does. It is constantly mentioned, but DCMS don’t ask. (Interview G2.01)

You know, I don’t see that we have a problem with DCMS in terms of research. It is not like DCMS is telling us we are not about research. It will be far harder if we were under a government that had a very clear, but limited sense of social and cultural agenda for its national museums. (Interview G2.01)

I think that DCMS are interested and polite, but they are not expert. So, they are very interested in cultural policy. They know nothing at all about bio-diversity policy, and that is natural. They know nothing at all about archaeology for the British Museum. (Interview G2.02)

It is important to mention that the situation with the KPI reporting differs across the institutions. The Natural History Museum reports to DCMS KPIs such as the number of peer-reviewed publications and the research grants received (NHM 2021), but the interviewees from the Museum have expressed the view that these were not seen as important by DCMS (Interview G1.02; G2.02). The British Library also has several DCMS KPIs for research, mainly in relation to the attendance in the Reading Rooms and supply of digital
content (BL 2006; BL 2019). These KPIs are related to ‘research of all kinds’ as described in the Library’s strategy Living Knowledge (BL 2015), meaning that these KPIs are much more in line with the usual DCMS visitor KPIs (DCMS 2022), where the diversity and volume of visits is much more important than the quality and relevance of research output as typically expressed in research and science policies (BEIS 2017a; 2021b). The British Library KPIs will be discussed in more details in the case study in Chapter 7 (see page 288).

In line with the above, DCMS policy documents show almost total absence of institutional research functions. In DCMS Culture White Paper from 2016 there are only few brief references to research, which mention that cultural heritage underpins research (DCMS 2016b: 46), pointing to AHRC as a key funder (DCMS 2016b: 52). This is similar in the Mendoza Review (2017), an independent review of museums in England commissioned by DCMS in response to the Culture White Paper from 2016 and undertaken by Neil Mendoza. In this report research is only a marginal consideration, and is not in any way defined or analysed. Even when Mendoza diagnoses the deep crisis in the collections’ expertise across the sector, this does not lead to any conclusions or recommendations that reflect on the sector’s research capacity (Mendoza 2017: 44). Going back in time, Treasures in Trust: A Review of Museum Policy, produced by DNH in 1996, also does not say anything about research (DNH 1996). In the interviews, several interviewees compensated for this absence of policy from DCMS by stressing the importance of other government departments for institutional research functions –

In terms of government – it is BIS, as was. It is Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and again this is where blending research and stressing that exhibitions are the product are research is important. If you then say to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or BEIS that you are doing a China Ming show, that is important to promote Britain’s soft power. Then you say – actually, we can do this only because the AHRC gave us the money to do research to underpin the exhibition. And that type of argument is a very powerful argument with government. (Interview G2.01)

This situation of the DCMS lack of interest regarding research functions,
as noted by the interviewees and as seen in the DCMS policy documents, contrasts with sometimes very detailed interest shown by DCMS regarding other issues. Using a historic example from the British Museum’s Board of Trustees records, we find a note on the Museum’s meeting with Baroness Blackstone as the Minister of the Arts on 27 September 2001, which notes that ‘the Minister was very determined in her views on the role of museums and what was not politically acceptable’ (BM Trustees 1998-2009: 6862, archival). According to this report to the Museum’s Board the Minister expressed detailed views on a range of issues – the Museum’s opening hours, scope of exhibition and education programmes, regional partnerships, future of the Study Centre and King’s Library, her preference for the use of existing collections as opposed to the growth of collections, detail of financial decisions, even potential for the Museum securing additional funding from higher education sources (BM Trustees 1998-2009: 6860-1, archival). Her policy preferences are clearly noted –

*In response to proposals for reductions in all areas of public, exhibition, curatorial and educational programming, including a more limited exhibitions programme and more focus on curriculum-related education, the Minister declared that education was central to government policy, and that her concern was for secondary, sixth form, and FE levels in particular. She saw potential for improvement in the support provided by Museum in these areas.*

*…When it was suggested that the speed of the Museum’s planned expansion of its network of regional partnerships would be slowed down, the Minister expressed her concern that this too was central to what the national museums should be doing, citing the imminent report on the subject by re:source.*

*(BM Trustees 1998-2009: 6860, archival)*

From this we can conclude that DCMS and government Ministers directly engage with the issues that are within their political and policy domain of interest. However, it has been a consistent feature of such ministerial engagements that research functions were not of interest. As we have seen, some interviewees in Group 2 saw this as a good outcome for research, seeing
it as a way to reduce governmental interference (Interview G2.01). However, while not wishing for a direct Ministerial interference, some interviewees perceived a total absence of research functions in the governmental frameworks and engagements as a problem, as we will investigate in the next section (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.03).
5.5 Policy vacuum and legitimacy

Unlike the Group 2 interviewees, comprising managerial staff, many Group 1 interviewees, representing curatorial and research active staff, have expressed uncertainty around institutional research remits, believing this to be a problem (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.03). As these staff are not dealing with governmental and institutional policy, they were primarily reacting to their lived experience within institutions, where they experienced that institutional strategies and decision making react to governmental policy priorities, and they were aware that these were outside of their sphere of work (Interview G1.01). This uncertainty regarding research was experienced as a lack of legitimacy and linked to a worry about its future. While the IRO status provided a certain level of assurance, the issues identified by these interviewees reach beyond the boundaries of IRO provision and are related to central government expectations and understanding of organisational remits, mostly within DCMS as institutional ‘home’ department and principal funder.

The interviewees expressed the following views -

*We are an independent research organisation for AHRC, so that is a kind of model there. There is a way we can say - we are kind of institution that does this thing. And so, if we look overall and if we find that we are not doing any AHRC related research, or collaborative doctoral students, or what have you, then that would be viewed negatively at corporate level. That kind of helps. And if that can be extended to cover other areas, that’s a kind of positive help in a way. If there was an articulated expectation from government that this is a kind of thing we should be doing, that would be interesting. I don’t hold out a strong expectation of that.* (Interview G1.01)

*One [significant issue] is mandate for research. Where do we get one? Or not? This could be a place that does not do research. It will just no longer be able to fulfil its mission, or be relevant for its user community. We probably can’t do that. … We don’t have a crisp one. And from whom? Right? So, we articulated research as being important responsibility, one of our purposes, but that mixes support
for research and researchers with doing and conducting research. And so, that ambiguity is not yet resolved, actually. So, one [significant issue] is how we get the mandate. (Interview G1.01)

I think government departments sometimes struggle to understand what research is in an institution like the British Library. They just know we’re not a university, and so they struggle to know what box to put us in, you know, do we educate school kids, do exhibitions, let people read books or do research? (Interview (G1.03)

Significantly, in Group 1, this question proved particularly difficult for several interviewees. When asked – Is research important to your organisation? Why does the organisation consider it important / not important? - two interviewees asked not to answer this question, one of them pointing to more senior staff as more appropriate to answer the question. One interviewee expressed an initial opinion but did not want to elaborate on it. One just confirmed the view as formulated by the interviewer and did not want to elaborate any further.

These views show that the uncertainties about research and its place within the UK national cultural organisations persist. This remains the case even though the current institutional strategies and corporate documentation include research as their key element. Even when deploying the concepts such as Grand Challenges, which is a research policy approach focusing on the types of research likely to resolve the most significant global societal and economic issues, there is a sense of the institutions working hard to fit with such agendas. This is because their research is integrated in the relevant governmental policies at their source, especially those coming from BEIS, such as the recent Industrial Strategy (BEIS 2017a, Interview G2.02), which was a key document aligning government science and research investments around the most significant challenges for the UK economic growth. While there were some examples of research functions being integrated with organisational strategies (Interviews G1.05; G2.01), in many cases research and science were seen as separate from other organisational priorities such as visitor attendance and access, regional collaboration agenda, commercial activities, and education and learning programmes (Interviews G1.01; G1.02).
Within the context in which the increasing amount of research and science in the UK national cultural organisations is externally funded and undertaken on project basis, the link of research functions with institutional core priorities and strategies is in danger of getting even weaker. While in all organisations, even at the Natural History Museum, the grant-in-aid continues to underpin research (Interviews G1.01; G1.06; G2.01; G2.02), the increase in project-based research could weaken the link of research functions and institutional grant-in-aid funding, which is seen as more directly related to the governmental policy priorities defined by DCMS. This could be especially problematic in the case of any future funding decreases.

While the going is good with the research funders, this might not be a problem, but any significant changes in the level of the UK research and science investment would put research functions in the UK national cultural organisations in an immediate jeopardy, potentially in much more serious way than it was the case in the 1990s, when one of the key characteristic of organisational crises was a loss of curatorial and other research jobs (Gee 1990a & 1991; BM Trustees: 30 October 1999; NHM DF 941/4; also see pages 240 and 316). As these research functions are not recognised in the core governmental policies, the institutions would not have any mechanism to protect this income. Short-term, externally funded projects and staff employed on fixed term contracts would be very quickly lost. Without any meaningful KPIs in place, it would be difficult to assess any damage that any such downturn in funding could cause. In the absence of any specific research policy and remit, the only mechanism that would be able to protect research functions in the UK national cultural organisations would be through interventions of trustees and directors, who would need to have a high level of resolve and conviction regarding the importance of research for the future of institutions and their remits in order to protect these activities in the case of significant funding downturn.

The interviewees at the British Museum and the Natural History Museum expressed their belief that their governing bodies are strongly committed to institutional research remits (Interviews G2.01; G2.02). However, much of this would be dependent on personalities and preferences of trustees.
and directors in place at any critical point in time. The British Museum case study in Chapter 6 (see page 227) explores the role of trustees and directors under the circumstances of financial pressure in more detail. This case study indicates that it does not take much for institutional governing bodies to choose other priorities over research.

The argument that DCMS is just deploying an arms-length policy, and this being the reason why it is not worried about research in the institutions (Interview G4.03), is particularly dangerous in this context. There are many examples where the government policy is very clear and eagerly promoted by DCMS and is clearly linked to institutional funding and KPIs, especially on access, learning and regional engagement (DCMS 2022). As research is absent from these policy frameworks, this situation could put institutional research functions in a difficult position. Survival and development of research in the UK national cultural organisations is dependent on funding from the parts of government without direct remit for the UK national cultural organisations (Interviews G2.01; G2.02). Any serious squeeze on the UK research and science budgets would put the UK research funders in the position where they would have to prioritise protecting research in universities and other bodies within their direct remit, which could lead to the loss of research and science in the UK national cultural organisations.
5.6 Funding

Historically, one of the main areas of pressure in relation to research functions was related to institutional funding which, according to many primary and secondary sources, seems to have been insufficient to support relevant staffing resources, especially in curatorial departments, and has led to numerous tensions and frequent cuts to staffing and activities (Strong 1997: 188-189, Wilson 2002: 341, BM Trustees: 5 October 1985; NHM DF941/4). Consequently, this means that institutional relationship with the government has frequently been troubled, and the story of research functions has often been at the heart of this tension, because research has been seen as a proxy for quality and capacity that is being lost during funding cuts, sometimes in order to expand public facing activities that are perceived as being more important to cultural policy makers (Gee 1990a: Griffin 1990 a&b). This is seen most clearly in the moments of crisis. For example, Roy Strong recalls his experience in 1976 when, as Director of V&A, he finds himself under governmental pressure to cut staff numbers by 25%. Under pressure, he decides to completely cut the V&A regional service, justifying his decision as follows –

*The decision to amputate I had reached on two counts. To me, knowledge and scholarship have always been sacrosanct. To destroy either in the great curatorial departments would be an act of vandalism for which I would never be able to forgive myself. An exhibition service to the regions could after all be done by another institution if the worst came to the worst.* (Strong 1997: 161)

Being fully aware that his decision will cut the activity which was seen as a priority for the Department of Education and Science, Strong thus makes a political point not just about V&A funding, but also about the need for institutional independence in deciding their priorities (Strong 1997: 160-162; Burton 1999: 229). During the 1990s, however, the UK national cultural organisations, including V&A, often chose not to protect scholarship at the time of cuts, but have frequently cut down and re-structured their curatorial departments with varied levels of success (NHM DF941/4 archival; BM
Trustees 30 October 1999 archival). This type of situation is described by an interviewee from the British Museum -

_The number of curators has gone down a lot, I think, in the last few years. And I don’t know about [British Library], but certainly in the BM they are very badly paid, very badly paid compared to universities. And that’s not so much because the activity isn’t valid, it is because people find it genuinely difficult to afford it a high enough priority when money is short. You know, the problems are that you have to open to the public, so you’ve got to do that. And there has been a huge increase in financial and HR legislation, and we have to have a reasonable number of people in HR because we are required by law to do these things. That is what you do – isn’t it – when you run out of money, you start with what you have to do by law and then you do that. So, I think it has been de facto very difficult to support research as much as people would like to, but at the same time, I think, the BM and other museums, and the Library have been very successful in getting research money, especially since the so-called IRO status._

_(Interview G2.04)_

We have already discussed the move towards the external funding models and this example further emphasises the growing dependence on the external models of funding to support research functions.

Another important issue to note in relation to funding is that the institutions do not provide an internal breakdown of how they allocate their grant-in-aid, and it is therefore impossible to say how their research functions fair in relation to their other priorities. The number of curatorial staff has often been seen as a proxy for institutional investment in research, but this could be misleading due to the changes in curatorial roles that tend to include an increased percentage of time dedicated to public engagement, media work, exhibitions and similar (Interviews G1.03; G1.05). The other possible funding indicator is the size of external research funding attracted by institutions, which might give us a better idea of institutional research and science strengths, as well as institutional dependency on external funding sources. For example, the Natural History Museum has reported that £4.4m in research grants has gone
to the Museum in 2019, and £6.8m in 2020 (NHM 2021). The British Library has reported that it has been a partner on the bids of the total value of £74.1m and a lead partner on the bids worth £1.4m in 2019-20. The report does not specify the amount of money that was directly received by the British Library (BL 2022).

In the interviews it was frequently mentioned that the external funding is seen as beneficial by the institutions, even strengthening the overall position of research in the institutions –

So, in a sense you have a win-win situation, where on one hand you have a philosophical acceptance of the importance of research by our Lords and Masters, and at the same time, they can actually see how research has contributed very significantly to the bottom line at a period, over the last ten years, when overall the government funding for museums has gone down. (Interview G2.01)

In addition to UKRI, the interviewees mentioned a wide range of funding sources of which the most significant ones were large research charities such as the Mellon Foundation, Leverhulme Trust, Wellcome Trust, and Arcadia Foundation. At the time of the interviews, European funding played a significant role in research work of several interviewees, which was accompanied with deep concerns regarding the UK exit from the European Union and how this might affect research and science in the UK national cultural organisations (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G2.02). The Natural History Museum interviewee explained in an interview held in 2016 -

The critical mass operates only on the European level, but benefits flow back to the UK. All of those elements where you have critical mass on the European scale, I think, what is likely to happen, is Britain will not quite understand those. What will happen is that the Research Councils and UKRI will say – does it make sense on the British scale, and do we get more if we buy into Europe? They won't say – this doesn't make sense on the British scale, but it makes sense on the European Scale. So, Britain will actually lose things, I think. This is my slightly pessimistic view. (Interview G2.02)
We are now starting to understand the impacts of the UK withdrawal from the European Union, which was further complicated by Covid-19 pandemic. For example, it is known that many top researchers left UK due to Brexit and funding uncertainty (Meyers & Springford 2022; Jones 2017b). It is also known that many universities experienced large reductions in research funding, especially due to the UK three-year partial absence from Horizon, key EU research funding and collaboration programme (Fazackerley 2023). However, we still do not know the impact of Brexit on research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. A report by ICM and SQW on behalf of Arts Council regarding the impacts of Brexit on the UK cultural sector in England (ICM & SQW 2017) reported on the impacts in relation to international collaboration, the impacts of economic uncertainty due to Brexit, the impact on cultural property policies, and the employment impacts due the loss of freedom of movement. As research is, once again, absent from the cultural policy framework, we are not told anything about any resulting research impacts. The UK research organisations across the board have welcomed the UK rejoining Horizon Europe in 2023 as an associate member (O'Grady 2023; Nature 2023).
5.7 AHRC and the IRO status

While the UK national cultural organisations rely on a wide range of funding sources to support their research functions, the role of the AHRC in establishing and promoting these organisations as Independent Research Organisations (IROs) is seen as central to the way in which research functions have developed in the UK national cultural organisations in the last decade. Except for the Natural History Museum, the interviewees from all other institutions interviewed for this study described their relationship with the AHRC as significant to their present and future research developments (Interviews G1.01; G1.03; G2.01; G3.01). In many cases the IRO status has offered a way to replace the lost organisational grant-in-aid funding for research functions and thus preserved their research capacity.

An interviewee from Historic England describes the context for the organisation’s process of becoming an IRO in 2017 -

*Our budget was reduced, it's been reduced since 2010. We had one in 2015, the last Comprehensive Spending Review, we had the one in 2010… We had 32% cut, it's huge… And that took out lots and lots of staff, lots of people. This one, 2015, not that big. It was 10%. It took some staff out, but we ring-fenced certain things like listing, planning. Research wasn't ring-fenced, it took redundancy, voluntary redundancy, a reshaping of bits and pieces. But one of the cuts was to our grants money. So, if we are looking at, you know, …you're reducing your grant you can give, reducing our funding, we need to look at different ways of doing it. (Interview G3.01)*

The IRO status, as a way to continue supporting research functions that would otherwise be lost in the funding cuts, applies to all UK national cultural organisations. While the grant-in-aid has not been entirely displaced in relation to research, especially as it continues to support core curatorial and scientific posts (Interviews G1.01; G1.04; G1.06; G2.01), it is rare that grant-in-aid can support any research activity that is not explicitly linked to a narrowing range of core organisational priorities and the running of everyday operations. The interviewee from Historic England explains -
So, it’s very rarely that [Historic England employees] have the opportunity to actively involve themselves in research. So, we often fund other people to do it, working with them as sort of advisors, because local authorities are being cut so much, they don’t have that capacity. ‘I’ve got an amazing project that I would love you to do’ - but I know they cannot do it, they just don’t have the time, and they’re not allowed to bring people in, because it’s different budgets and different ways. So, it’s actually working differently, which is interesting with this whole sort of expansion into IRO and into the PhDs and trying to have that bigger, sort of, more widespread linkages. (Interviews G3.01)

However, the interviews also show that the IRO status has had much wider impact on the institutions, including providing the impetus for the institutions to develop their research processes in order to fulfil the IRO criteria, as well as using the IRO status as a vehicle for recognition of research, for setting their research priorities in line with their institutional strategies, and feeling empowered to take lead in formulating research questions that are important to their organisations and instigating new research collaborations (Interviews G2.01; G3.01). A British Museum interviewee described how the IRO status kick-started a ‘renaissance’ for the Museum’s research, including of how the process of applying to become an IRO meant a complete re-organisation of research functions at the British Museum -

*But when they announced that they are going to have IROs, the original process for becoming an IRO with the AHRC was quite major document, which required us to demonstrate that we did research. We needed to provide the lists of publications of at least ten named researchers, and the whole process of sorting out our IRO application meant the Museum sat down and re-thought everything about research. And it was a complete root and branch change.*

(Interview G2.01)

The process re-conceptualised the British Museum’s approach to research, catalysing change from scholarship to research, but also opening new doors and possibilities for their research funding -
And with AHRC funding, we had some quick wins, which looking back was very useful. Before we became an IRO, we were bringing less than £90,000 in external funding per year for anything to do with research or scholarship or publication. Last year it was £2m. This year it will be £3.4m. And that is not AHRC. AHRC probably constitutes only a quarter of the total external funding we raised for research in the last ten years, but we wouldn’t have done it without them. Even the things we could have applied for like Leverhulme, we never thought about doing it, because we never thought about our activity in terms of research. We never thought of packaging it in terms of doing projects. It was – I’m going to write a catalogue of the collections and it will take twenty-five years and I will finish it by the time I’ve retired. (Interview G2.01)

In addition to funding, all organisations identified the importance that the IRO status has had for internal and external recognition of their research functions. The IRO status is frequently providing a framework for the institutional management to validate research activity, especially when managers do not have research experience themselves (Interviews G1.03;
G1.05). However, the main validation criteria seem to be about its impact on institutional finances (Interviews G1.01; G1.03: G2.01). The IRO status is also central to ensuring survival and inclusion of research in organisational strategic frameworks, and in terms of raising the status of research both internally and externally. This new status is further emphasised by the IRO status giving the institutions an opportunity to be lead partners on research projects -

*In terms of being an IRO you can be the lead, you can say, 'Right, this is what we want to do,' and look for others… It gives us as an organisation much more control in terms of how we want to move things, certainly in terms of meeting some of our corporate objectives, but also sectoral strategy and things like that. There’s a fine line between our research agenda and the sector, and to be blunt, the main reason is, outside of, say, the universities, is that we are the main funder for historic environment.* (Interview G3.01)

The relationship between the UK national cultural organisations in their role as IROs and AHRC is based on the usefulness of IROs in helping AHRC achieve greater visibility, better impacts and returns for their investment, and, in the most recent times, providing a vehicle for accessing the so-called hypothecated research funding and other funding streams that are focusing on larger, more strategic research projects, such as under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Newton Fund (AHRC 2019: 33; Interview G4.01). These types of investments tend to be more closely controlled by BEIS, or even the Treasury (Interview G4.01). It was the British Library that accessed the first Newton Fund project for AHRC with its project *Two Centuries of Indian Print* (BL 2018a:14; BEIS 2017c). It was also the British Library in collaboration with the Alan Turing Institute, that brought in the AHRC’s first Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) for the project *Living with Machines* (BL 2020: 10). The second AHRC’s SPF project came via a cross-IRO project *Towards a National Collection* (BL 2022: 18; Towards a National Collection 2022). As well as expanding the AHRC budgets (Interview G4.01), these projects are enabling arts and humanities to join sciences in bringing forward the types of projects that are deemed to be of sufficient scale and strategic importance for the UK research and science strategy (BEIS 2017a,b&c; BEIS 2021a). This is
invaluable in the UK political environment that is frequently hostile to arts and humanities research (Lough 2022). The more recent reasons of this hostility fall within the ideological area of ‘culture wars’ and the sectors’ opposition to Brexit, as well as a supposedly economic argument that an arts and humanities degree is waste of money (Davies 2020). However, all these more recent issues were not a predominant consideration at the time of interviews for this study. The main concern was still only about the size of impact and scale of arts and humanities research in relation to the increasingly ambitious science projects. An AHRC interviewee explained, primarily referring to the GCRF and Newton bids, as this interview was given prior to the SPF funding being available –

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\text{What it comes down to for me – it is a scale of opportunity. And by scale, those bids were large. I mean, they are large in anybody’s terms, but they are certainly large for an arts and humanities researcher in terms of what they had previous funding for. They are not large for the IROs, because, you know, given the opportunity, you are prepared to think in big sums, because you know what you’d want to do if you had the opportunity to spend those big sums. And I think it is that readiness, and it does come back to strategy. As I said at the beginning, I think, in universities the individual researcher, understandably, and this is not a criticism of them, will be focused on their project, and that may be a collaborative project with others, but is it a grant level project. (Interview G4.01)}
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The relationship between AHRC and the IROs has been developing and changing over the last decade and growing in its strategic intent and potential. An AHRC interviewee explains –

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\text{I think that's why we've tried to use the IRO group over the last, I would probably say over the last five to six years, more proactively, to view you as a group of organisations. A bit like, in some respects, the way in which we might go and meet with the Pro-Vice Chancellors for research in the Russell Group, or we might go meet with the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Deans for arts and humanities in the Great Western Four. I think we've tried to view them actually collectively – the IROs.}
\]
Although you don't speak for the entire sector, because of your scale and because of your capacity to do some of the brokerage, some of the lobbying, some of the political engagement - we should use you more effectively in terms of how we're thinking about the strategy for that sector or how we are thinking about the interactions and intermediary role that you can have between the AHRC and the DCMS, for example. I mean, I'm not sure, because I don't think we've ever so explicitly articulated that that's what we wanted to get from you and what we think is beneficial for you as well. But I think that's where we're heading because we know that in your annual reports – you are citing the fact that exhibition programmes, museum’s programmes, digitisation programmes were funded by the AHRC or by another Council through a competitive process, because it's a badge of honour for you to secure that funding for the quality of the work that you are doing. (Interview G4.01)

In the research environment where the government is getting ever closer to the research process and priorities, the IROs have both knowledge and capacity to develop opportunities that are aligned with governmental priorities of the day and thus unlock new, large scale research funding for arts and humanities. And they can also organise valuable opportunities to showcase research to key decision makers, as encapsulated by an interviewee from the British Museum -

Why the AHRC love us, and love the British Library, is that they can see that you can bring a Minister here, and say – this exhibition by the way, all research was funded by the AHRC. (Interview G2.01)
This relationship of mutual benefit, however, is vulnerable to policy changes upstream from AHRC. It is also vulnerable to the increasing political pressure on arts and humanities. The research impact agenda, which the institutions so often describe as their own domain, is increasingly moving further away from the models used by the IROs to date. We are already seeing that policies such as ‘levelling up’ are moving AHRC attention to English regions and towards the inclusion of smaller cultural organisations away from London. It will be interesting to see how the IRO status might evolve in the years ahead, and, indeed, if the UK national cultural organisations have gained sufficient experience, research strengths, and better understanding of their own research functions that would enable them to grow their research activity in a way that is aligned to their own strategic needs.

We can conclude that the IRO status has given the UK national cultural organisations a lifeline for their research functions, which were under severe
pressure following the successive funding cuts of the 1980s and the 1990s, not to mention the damaging loss of funding in the austerity cuts of the 2010s. It also provided an impetus for the institutions to re-define and re-organise their research, and to become more sensitive to the types of outcomes and quality of research that they were producing. The IRO status also provides an important validation for institutional recognition of research, especially in the situations where the importance of research was being de-emphasised. Research functions of IROs led to many new partnerships with universities and other research organisations. Yet, none of this is being documented as an official set of sectoral functions and KPIs. And despite the IRO status, research functions in the UK national cultural organisations still lack any policy footing outside UKRI and AHRC.
5.8 Lobbying and Parliamentary Inquiries

We have seen in the AHRC related discussion above that there is a perception of the institutional strength in relating to and lobbying government (Interviews G2.01; G4.01). This includes deploying both individual relationships and contacts of its directors and trustees, as well as more formal processes such as policy consultations, All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs), provision of evidence for Parliamentary Inquiries, and a variety of interactions with Ministers, MPs, and both Houses of Parliament.

The main aim of institutional lobbying is almost always related to funding, especially during comprehensive spending reviews. An interviewee with the DCMS background described their experience as follows -

*Well, spending reviews just happened anyway, and then every two or three years or whatever. Sometimes, they were comprehensive reviews… But they're resetting the spending priorities for a three-year period. And whenever that happened, [the] job was to get from the museums all the arguments that they could make for why they should get a bigger slice of the cake in the spending round. …Meanwhile, the museum directors themselves would make it their business to do their own lobbying. So, actually, [DCMS] efforts were probably less important than the efforts of the museum directors. Because you have twelve or fifteen of the most powerful people in the cultural sector, and if they invite the minister to a dinner, well, the minister has no option but to accept really. And what happens at those dinners, I didn't know about, because I generally wasn't invited. And so, you have this system where, in a way, the government doesn't have many options but to give the museums an increase.* (Interview G4.03)

This experience predates the austerity cuts, and it oversimplifies the complexity of relationships between the UK national cultural institutions and the government. The second half of the 20th century did not produce a set of harmonious relationships between the UK national cultural organisation and the government (Strong 1997; Wilson 1989). Strong (1997) mentions another
key mechanism in the institutional dealings with the government – Parliamentary Select Committees. He recalls how David Wilson, Director of British Museum at the time, was giving evidence to the Select Committee ‘telling them that unless the British Museum was maintained it would close in two years’, producing ‘a flurry in the media who should have seen through him, overstating things as usual’ (Strong 1997: 295). Quite an interesting comment considering Roy Strong’s own gift for overstating and dramatising issues.

The work of Parliamentary Select Committees, especially the Science and Technology Select Committees, included several Inquiries of particular relevance to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. This includes -

- Lords’ Select Committee on Science and Technology inquiries on heritage science in 2006 and 2012, discussing the crisis in this field, amongst other things noting DCMS lack of oversight and the need for the appointment of Chief Scientific Adviser for DCMS. (House of Lords 2006, 2012)
- Commons’ Education and Skills Committee on Library Resources for Higher Education in 2003, including the evidence related to the inadequacies of DCMS policies in relation the British Library and its educational and research provision, and the lack of appropriate policy links between DCMS And DfES. (House of Commons 2002, 2003)
- Commons’ Science and Technology Committee inquiry in the funding of the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew in 2014-15, noting the risk of underfunding and the potential loss of scientific capabilities at the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew. (House of Commons 2014 a&b; 2015 a&b)

Select Committees are cross-party groups of MPs set up to investigate
different issues arising across government, especially where there is a specific concern or a particular development that government wishes to understand in more detail, or where there is a need to justify public investment (House of Commons n.d.). In three cases listed above, the Select Committees were directly concerned with an aspect of research functions of the UK national cultural organisations (House of Commons 2014a&amp;b, 2015a&amp;b, House of Lords 1992, 2002a, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012). For the Commons' Select Committee on Library Resources in Higher Education (2002, 2003) the primary concern were academic libraries, but the British Library issues arose due to the importance of its role within the UK research library ecosystem (House of Commons 2003: 4-5).

An interviewee from DCMS re-called the Heritage Science inquiry in 2012 (House of Lords 2012). When asked if this inquiry was a type of lobbying activity, they confirmed –

<My assumption had to be yes, definitely. Lobby interest groups who are able, successfully, to work out how the agendas of Select Committees are decided. And then they lobby, furiously, the members of those Select Committees. And they get their particular issue on to the list of inquiries. If you're a Select Committee, you've got maybe two or three inquiries every year. So, it's basically a form of lobbying. And then using the committee, the lobby group can then influence [their recommendations]. So, I would say that was a good example. I mean, it's smart politics. It's a way of using resources at your disposal. (Interview G4.03)

The interviewee also recalled -

I mean, the topic of heritage science was of no interest to government whatsoever, you know. It was irrelevant. The report […] sort of made out that well, the DCMS effectively funds a lot of heritage science, because it funds all these organisations who are responsible for funding heritage science. So indirectly, if not even directly, it is already funding a lot of heritage science. … But the report was very critical of
DCMS for not, sort of, prioritising heritage science above everything else. (Interview G4.03)

The report said -

...much of the evidence we received suggested that DCMS was not providing the leadership required to support and promote the community. (House of Lords 2012: 12)

The report also noted that AHRC ‘responded enthusiastically to the call to support heritage science’ (House of Lords 2012: 7).

This is not dissimilar to the Commons’ Education and Skills Committee on Library Resources for Higher Education, where Lynne Brindley, the British Library CEO at the time, explains that ‘DfES was not consulted regarding the work of the British Library or the RLSG (Research Libraries Support Group), as the sponsoring department of the British Library was the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’. In this Inquiry HEFCE emphasises the importance of the British Library’s provision for higher education (House of Commons 2002: 10). Very similar cross-governmental fragmentation is a feature of the Inquiries on the systematic biology, which is discussed into more details in Chapter 8 (see page 326).

Putting aside the lobbying dynamics, the Select Committee Inquiries tend to throw the light on the lack of cross-governmental approaches regarding institutional work. In all the cases mentioned, we can identify specific deficiencies and lack of joined up approaches related to research functions of the UK national cultural organisations. An interviewee from AHRC perceived the Select Committees as a primary place that is used to deal with the absence of cross-departmental dialogue (Interview G4.01). To explain it, they used the example of the national digital strategy -

I would add [cross-departmental dialogue] to the list of things that don’t quite work. I mean, where the dialogue exists, and this probably sounds like an odd way of working by way of intermediaries is – the dialogue goes through the Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiries and through the evidence materials that are gathered for that. So, the Research Councils collectively, and it is usually collectively, it is very
rare for the Research Councils to make responses just from one. The Research Councils collectively would respond to a Select Committee Inquiry about ‘Where is the digital strategy?’ We wouldn’t do that in partnership or join up with whatever DCMS is going to submit to that. And I do think that, on the plus side, the Select Committees, lobby groups, various stakeholders are increasingly recognizing that there is a big challenge, because it’s just not joined up. Lot of policy areas are so fragmented. But fundamentally, you know, we’re also in the territory where, when it comes to things like the Spending Review, it is government department against government department for their own turf. And, you know, that itself causes problems then. (Interview G4.01)

It is not surprising therefore that the issues of research in UK national cultural organisations have been a subject of the Select Committee inquiries on so many occasions, and that the fragmentation of the cross-governmental policy has been a prominent feature of these Inquiries.

For the interviewees from the institutions, however, these inquiries often mean much more than point scoring across different government departments and arms-length bodies (Interview G3.02). In particular, research active staff in the institutions, sometimes see the Select Committees as the only way to give voice to the issues that would otherwise stay invisible. While this is clearly a form of lobbying, it is also a safeguard in the cases of governmental and institutional neglect or mismanagement (House of Commons 2014a&b, 2015 a&b). It also provides a way to address the issues falling in between the cracks of different departmental remits and interests (House of Commons 2002, 2003). An interviewee with the botanical garden background recalled a circumstance of the launch of the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew Inquiry –

Well, the cuts were imminent and, you know, obviously the botanical world got wind of this. I don’t know who started the petition, but once you get 100,000 signatures that triggers a debate in Parliament. So, that’s what happened. … I was very concerned about the fact that these cuts were being made with no strategy in place. You know, if you’re restructuring an organisation, you need a strategy first and then
you cut the people who don't fit with the strategy. You don't make cuts and then develop a strategy. … To let 50 people go, you know, which they were in the process of doing, without a framework of some kind, that was a concern. But also, shifting and moving towards pure science and once more, telling people or telling the world what needs to be done, rather than doing it. (Interview G3.02)

Evidently, Select Committee Inquiries are a significant channel for discussing the UK national cultural institutions research functions. Unfortunately, they take place mostly at the times of crisis, when other avenues to intervene have failed. Also, while Select Committee Inquiries have tackled many important issues and produced some relevant recommendations, they do not seem to be an effective mechanism that has been able to achieve long-term solutions.
This Chapter shows that the relationship between the UK national cultural organisations and governmental actors and processes has always been and remains complex. These complex relationships arise, in part, due to the multiple institutional purposes that align with different governmental areas – from science and education to international diplomacy and regional development (Interview G2.01, G2.02, G2.03). The situation is made even more complex due to frequent changes within the government itself. A historic overview in this study shows that there was never a machinery of government solution that was easy to align to all aspects of institutional remits. This means that the UK national cultural organisations always had to find the ways to manage their affairs by forming relationships across government (Wilson 1989). Institutional research functions found themselves divorced from their ‘home’ government department’s remits since the formation of DNH and subsequently DCMS. However, even earlier arrangements, such as within DES, were not able to deal with all institutional complexities under one roof.

The government departments and arms-length bodies dealing with higher education and science played a significant role in enabling the UK national cultural organisations to develop their research functions, from DSIR work in the 1940s (Urquhart 1954; 1990) to the UKRI IRO status today (Interview G2.01). The IRO status awarded to the majority of the UK national cultural organisations by AHRC, now part of UKRI, made a big difference in raising institutional research capacity and confidence, as well as enabling professionalisation of their research functions (Interviews G1.01; G1.03; G2.01). This resulted in the development of better arrangements for research development and management, improvements in research quality, and in rising institutional ambitions to tackle more complex research questions (Interviews G1.03; G2.01). However, the IRO arrangement is not able to deal with the inherent instability resulting from the lack of official governmental remit for research in the UK national cultural organisations and the absence of national policy in this area, which continues to cause difficulties, especially at the times of funding reductions (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.03).
This study shows that the governmental and arms-length bodies fragmentation, combined with the greater institutional focus on their public-focused functions, creates an unstable environment for development of research in the UK national cultural organisations. While research activity in the UK national cultural organisations is surviving due to the strong governmental investment in science (CST 2021; UKRI 2022b) and the growing institutional ability to produce high quality research and societal and economic impact (Interviews G2.01; G2.02; G4.02), there remains a concern regarding the absence of any national policy frameworks for research within GLAM (Interviews G1.01; G4.01). This means that institutional research functions remain vulnerable to any future changes in funding and policy. This vulnerability is greater than in those parts of research sector that sit directly within governmental departments with research and science remit, and that would be treated as a priority by research funders if such a need was to arise.

These findings support our second hypothesis that the on-going absence of research from governmental core policy frameworks for the UK national cultural organisations, as well as the persistent policy fragmentation between science and culture, have had a negative and destabilising effect on the institutional research capabilities. The second part of this hypothesis is that institutional strategies and behaviours in the UK national cultural organisations are showing gradual move from research-led to culture-led policy and strategic drivers. In this chapter, we have seen some evidence that supports this view, especially in terms of the absence of research functions within DCMS policy frameworks and KPIs (DCMS 2016b). The case studies in the forthcoming chapters will investigate if there is further evidence to support this hypothesis.

This chapter substantially adds to our knowledge of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations as it is the first time that they are described in relation to the machinery of government, its characteristics, and the complex relationships and fragmentation within the government.
6 The British Museum Scholarship Committee
1974-2001: institutional governance and research

6.1 Introduction

Image 10 - The British Museum’s Enlightenment Gallery, previously the King’s Library. Author’s own photo.

This chapter contains the first case study developed to explore in detail the research questions investigated in this thesis. The case study follows the work of the British Museum Scholarship Committee from 1974 to 2001, helping us to understand how the British Museum has governed its research, key changes and issues taking place during this time, and especially how its research functions were affected and changed at the time when the Museum was experiencing significant financial difficulties during the 1990s. It is intended that the case study will expand our understanding of the key characteristics of research in the UK national cultural organisations and how they changed over time. The study focuses on specific issues arising at the British Museum at the end of the 20th century, which will broaden our understanding of tensions and difficulties that can arise in relation to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.
The case study contributes to this study’s hypothesis that institutional governance plays significant part in the way in which research functions develop in cultural organisations, especially in the way in which institutions react to the pressures created by governmental policy, funding, or other external and internal events. It also contributes further evidence to support this study’s hypothesis that it was especially during the 1990s that the pressures in policy and funding environment, combined with the need to reform both research and public functions of the UK national cultural organisations, created a series of critical junctures that led to significant changes in the way in which research functions operate in the UK national cultural organisations today.

In order to do this, the chapter first looks at the British Museum’s foundational governance arrangements and purposes, and it identifies the pre-20th century tensions between the Museum’s public and research purposes. This provides us with a basis to explore the work of the Museum’s Scholarship Committee in the second half of the 20th century. First, the study looks at the Committee’s work in the 1970s and the 1980s, which is characterised by a slower pace of change and a sense of continuity, with a strong focus on publication matters. This provides a picture of the British Museum’s research functions as they were before a period of more turbulent changes during the 1990s. To explore the nature of pressures and changes taking place in the 1990s, the study will investigate *A Fundamental Review of the Museum’s Operations* – known as the Edwards Review and compiled in 1996 by Andrew Edwards, former deputy secretary to the Treasury, commissioned by the Chairman of the British Museum’s Trustees (Edwards unpublished 1996). This chapter will also look into the financial issues arising during the completion of the Great Court. The Chapter will explore how these events created a critical juncture (Amenta 2011: 51) leading to a long-term change in the way in which the British Museum’s research functions are governed and structured, which has created the foundation for the British Museum’s research set up that we have today.
6.2 Board of Trustees and the British Museum’s definition of purpose

The current British Museum’s governance structures have been established following *The British Museum Act 1963* (Act of Parliament 1963), which, among other things, replaced and simplified the Museum’s previous, often described as unwieldy, Board of Trustees (Kehoe 2002:52), which was so complex that, according to David Wilson, it ‘would put the composition of all modern quangos totally in the shade’ (Wilson 2002: 21). Coming into existence in 1753 with forty-one trustees (Wilson 2002: 21), by the early twentieth century the Board reached a size of fifty-one trustees drawn from three different groups – twenty-six official trustees, one trustee appointed by the Sovereign, nine family trustees from Sloan, Cotton, Harley, Townley, Elgin and Knight families, as well as fifteen elected trustees (Kehoe 2002: 53). From the very start the Board of Trustees included a number of scholarly representatives such as the President of the Royal Society and the President of the Royal College of Physicians (Kehoe 2002: 52). The President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries and the President of the Royal Academy were added in 1824 (Kehoe 2002: 53). The link with the British Academy was active from the Academy’s foundation in 1902, with the Academy’s inception meeting held at the British Museum on 28 June 1901, with Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, who was the British Museum’s Principal Librarian from 1888 to 1909 (Wilson 2002: 179, 197) and Sir Frederick Kenyon, who was Principal Librarian from 1909 to 1931 (Wilson 2002, 198, 238), directly engaged with the Academy’s formation and subsequently serving as the British Academy’s second and sixth Presidents (Kenyon 1952: 5, 8; British Academy n.d.; Wilson 2002: 179).

The British Museum Act 1963 states that the new Board of Trustees will have twenty-five persons, as follows -

(a) *one appointed by Her Majesty*;

(b) *fifteen appointed by the Prime Minister*;

(c) *four appointed by [the Secretary of State] on the nominations of the Presidents of the Royal Society, the Royal Academy, the British Academy and the Society of Antiquaries of London respectively*; and
The purpose of the British Museum as an organisation dedicated to research and advancement of knowledge was defined from the very outset in the Act for the Purchase of the Museum or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane in 1753, which states that –

*Whereas all arts and sciences have a connection with each other, and discoveries in natural philosophy, and other branches of special knowledge, for the advancement an improvement whereof the said Museum and Collection was intended, do and may, in many instances, give help and success to the most useful experiments and inventions; therefore, to the end that the said Museum and Collection may be preserved and maintained, not only for the inspection and entertainment of the learned and the curious, but for the general use and benefit of the public, be it enacted.* (Act of Parliament 1753)

The above definition, however, rather than providing an unambiguous answer regarding the British Museum’s purpose, tells us that the Museum is intended to balance the use of its collections by scholars and general public. How to achieve this balance stayed at the centre of debates about the Museum’s purpose and future ever since. From its early days, the British Museum’s dealings with public and its scholarly purpose were proving difficult to balance (Wilson 2002 98-101). Many historic examples provide evidence of the British Museum being governed for ‘inspection and entertainment of the learned’, while ‘the general use and benefit of the public’, described as a basis of the Museum’s foundation (Act of Parliament 1753), was either actively discouraged or neglected (Edwards 1839: 10, 75). As early as 1784 the records tell us of the backlogs of ticket applications to visit the galleries was reaching up to 2,000, prompting Dr Matthew Maty, the Principal Librarian at the time, to complain that its liberally educated officers have to deal with ‘the lower kind of people’ (Miller 1973: 71). The high public demand to view the Museum’s collections was generating a significant volume of ticket applications from those who were less ‘learned, and from the less privileged strata of society, which not sitting well with the Museum’s view of itself as an
elite organization for ‘the learned’. This example shows us that the Museum’s public and research functions were in conflict from its earliest days.
6.3 Public and research functions in conflict

The ‘narrow accessibility’ and ‘the extremely imperfect state of its collections’ (Edwards 1839: 5) occasionally led to inquiries and debate regarding the British Museum’s purpose and operations by both politicians or the press, frequently centering on the tensions arising between public access and scholarship. During the Parliamentary Inquiry regarding the state of the British Museum in 1835, the records show Sir Henry Ellis, who was Principal Librarian from 1827 to 1856 (Wilson 2002: 82-84, 129), doing his best to prevent the Museum opening on public holidays to prevent ‘mischief’ of ‘the most vulgar class’. (House of Commons 1935: 100, paragraph 1329). Principal Librarian was a title used by the British Museum Directors until the British Library Act (Act of Parliament 1972) separated the Library from the Museum.

Image 11 - Sir Henry Ellis, lithograph by Henry Corbould 1836.
Print copy held at the British Library. Author’s own photo.

Ellis told the Parliamentary Inquiry in 1835 that ‘people of a higher grade
would hardly wish to come at the same time as sailors from the dock yard and girls whom they might bring with them’, claiming that such people would not ‘gain any improvement from the sight of our collection’ (House of Commons 1935: 100, paragraph 1329). He perceived that the main purpose of the British Museum, and especially its library, was ‘to assist research, to aid those that are more professionally connected to knowledge’ (House of Commons 1935: 99, paragraph 1314).

Having more nuanced feeling regarding the Museum’s public duty and much better political skills (Miller 1973, 1979; Edwards 1839), Anthony Panizzi, Principal Librarian from 1856 to 1866 (Wilson 2002: 129-130; Miller 1973: 245, 251), who is recognised as a great reformer of the British Museum Library (Miller 1973, 1979), stated in the 1835 Inquiry that he wants ‘a poor student to have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity, of following his rational pursuits, of consulting the same authorities, of fathoming the most intricate inquiry as the richest man in the kingdom’ (Edwards 1870: 413). Yet even Panizzi bewails a difficulty of balancing public access and entertainment with research and education -

*Public opinion is exercised only upon one of the purposes for which the British Museum was instituted; that is, upon its establishment as a showplace. Unfortunately, as to its most important and most noble purpose, as an establishment for the furtherance of education, for study and research, the public seems to be almost indifferent.*
*(Edwards 1839: 75)*

These attitudes did not change much in the first half the 20th century. Researching the British Museum in the period from 1906 to 1939, Kehoe finds ‘no indication that the Trustees or, equally important, the Directors, were concerned with issues other than those of scholarship’ (Kehoe 2002: 310). Bringing it closer to our times, we find that this tendency to govern the British Museum with research in mind, including seeing research as being in tension with its public functions, has not gone away, even at the time when visitor numbers start to rapidly expand (Wilson 2002; 98-101). In more recent times, David Wilson, Director of the British Museum from 1977 to 1992, tells us in his book on the purpose and politics of the British Museum that ‘the Museum must
be run by people who are professionally involved in the collections and who are academically able to deal with them’, while ‘business ability, educational prowess and public relations must all be subordinated to this’ (Wilson 1989: 119). Robert Anderson, the British Museum Director from 1992 to 2002 (Willson 2002: 298-9), complains about the burden imposed by the Government requiring museums to become ‘agents of social change, which has meant that ‘the ability to conduct long-term research has suffered’ (Anderson 2007: 14).

With research being so prominent within the British Museum’s governance in all periods of its history, this chapter is analysing the work of the British Museum Scholarship Committee from 1974 to 2001 with an intent to understand the institutional governance and processes relevant for its research functions in the second half of the 20th century.
6.4 The British Museum Scholarship Committee

6.4.1 The British Museum Scholarship Committee: formation and composition

The British Museum Trustees’ Scholarship Committee is known as the Research Committee today and it continues to play a prominent role within the Museum’s organisational governance (Interview G2.01; Hill & Williams 2016 unpublished). In 2018 the Research Committee was constituted as a Sub-Committee of the British Museum’s Standing Committee with a role ‘to provide expert advice and oversight of the BM’s research programme, to monitor the implementation of the research strategy and provide quality assurance’ (BM 2018: 33). During 2018-19 the Committee was chaired by Sir Paul Nurse, former President of the Royal Society, the current Director of the Francis Crick Institute, and the winner of the Nobel prize for Psychology or Medicine in 2001. Until 2 October 2016, the Committee was chaired by Lord Stern of Brentford, who was during this time President of the British Academy (BM 2017b: 24, BM 2018: 25).

The British Museum Trustees’ Committee on Scholarship came into being in December 1974 as an initiative of John Pope-Hennessy, who was Director of the British Museum from 1974 to 1977 (Wilson 2002: 300; BM Scholarship: 24 October 1974). The initial purpose of the Committee was to enhance the productivity of the British Museum’s scholarship, especially in regard to the Museum’s publications (BM Scholarship: 20 April 1994). Before its name was changed into the Research Committee in 2002, when its remit was also re-defined (BM Trustees: 28 September 2002), the Scholarship Committee was operational for twenty-eight years and held one or two meetings per year (BM Scholarship 1974-2001). The Scholarship Committee formally reported to the Board of Trustees, thus presenting an opportunity to follow historic development of the British Museum’s research functions through a governance lens. In addition to John Pope-Hennessy, who initiated it, the Committee covered the directorship of David Wilson from 1977 to 1992, and Robert Anderson from 1992 to 2002, with all three directors taking a leading
role in the Committee’s work (BM Scholarship 1974-2001). Its work covered nearly the entire prolonged period of the British Library’s administrative and physical leaving of the British Museum up to the completion of the Library’s move to St Pancras in 1998. Its timeline also coincides with a period of digital change at the Museum, incorporating the very first discussions in the 1980s about emerging opportunities to use computers for inventory purposes and in the production of the Museum’s catalogues (BM Scholarship: 17 May 1984). In political and policy terms, its work spans a period across five UK governments from Harold Wilson to Tony Blair, each new government generating a range of different opportunities and challenges for the British Museum.

The Scholarship Committee received detailed reports from all British Museum departments, reporting on the issues of publications, seminars and conferences, staffing, science labs, research facilities, libraries, and other research matters (BM Scholarship: 24 October 1974). A separate committee covered excavations and fieldwork until the end of 1999, when it was merged with the Scholarship Committee (BM Committee on Excavations and Fieldwork 1999; BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999). The meetings were chaired by a trustee, who had a role to lead on the scholarship matters, with another two to four trustees present at each meeting, as well as Director, Deputy Director, Keepers from different departments and other staff if relevant for a specific agenda (BM Scholarship 1974-2001).

At its inception in 1974 the Committee was chaired by Lord Annan, who was, at this time, Provost of University College London, as well as a trustee of the British Museum (BM Scholarship: 24 October 1974). The Scholarship Committee included both non-academic and academic trustees, but at all times the Committee included some trustees with academic background, meaning that at different times the Committee benefited from the expertise of archaeologists such as Colin Renfrew and Barry Cunliffe, art historians such as Ernst Gombrich, Peter Lasko and William Watson, English studies academic Gillian Beer, and classicist Moses Finley (BM Scholarship 1974-2001). Many of these trustees had professional links with the British Museum and specific collection interests lasting throughout their career. In the case of
William Watson and Peter Lasko, they were both curators at the British Museum early in their careers, moving to academia and then eventually returning to the Museum as trustees (Wilson 2002: 260, 341).

The Minutes of the Scholarship Committee were presented as a standing item at the Board of Trustees meetings, where further discussion about research topics frequently took place, and additional decisions and recommendations were made (BM Trustees: 27 March 1999). While we know that the Committee’s work continues to this day, now known as the Research Committee, the archival records stop being available from 2001 onwards. The British Museum’s Board of Trustees decided in 1999 that the Board Minutes will stop including any additional annexes and attachments, including those from the Scholarship Committee (BM Trustees: 26 June 1999), meaning that from this point we do not have such a detailed and open record of the interactions between the Board of Trustees and the Committee.

6.4.2 The British Museum Scholarship Committee: purpose

The purpose of the Scholarship Committee set in its initial Terms of Reference in 1974 was –

To consider the contribution to knowledge of the Museum as a whole, to decide what measure of support should be given to each project, and whether and by what steps effort should be directed from less to more productive areas. (BM Scholarship: 20 April 1994)

The first documented meeting, contains a series of departmental reports requested from the Keepers, answering a range of questions concerned with departmental publications, production of catalogues, how different publications could be accelerated, specialisations of staff, facilities for travel, as well as the library provision (BM Scholarship: 24 October 1974). The Keepers responded in detail, listing publications and work in progress, while also not shying away from listing various difficulties and weaknesses of their departments. Department of Ethnography noted the lack of expertise in many areas, Keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities Department explained that he cannot focus on publication due to administrative duties and re-designing of
galleries, the lack of illustrators was creating bottlenecks in Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities. Keeper of Coins and Medals pointed out that more Research Assistants would free senior staff from ‘dealing with enquiries, correspondence, assisting serious students and visitors with their problems and in the preparation and annotation of material for photography, casting, etc.’ (BM Scholarship: 24 October 1974). In turn, the trustees follow with a candid critique of publications and activity reported, with Lord Annan concluding at the subsequent Board of Trustees meeting that –

...although the scholarly work and publications of a number of departments were admirable, many departments had too narrow a concept of type of scholarly work which should be carried on in the Museum and the nature of the publications which the Museum should produce. (BM Scholarship: 19 June 1975)

The problems of the quality, timeliness, cost, and format of the Museum’s publications was a dominant feature of the Committee in the first years of its existence. However, while the focus on publications never completely goes away, by 1978 the Committee is looking to move away from its publication focus ‘to concern itself more with the state of scholarship in the Museum’ (BM Scholarship: 10 October 1978). Moses Finley, the Committee Chair at the time, informs the Board of Trustees, that –

It was his impression that scholarship in the British Museum had become too much devoted to the writing of catalogue entries and the publication of catalogues. Among the older staff at least, it was highly professional but too narrow, too much interested in objects and not enough in the people who made and used them. As a result scholarship in the Museum was on the whole not in those areas where progress was currently being made and British Museum staff were not among those who were first thought of when participants in major international colloquies or symposia were being selected. The Committee should exert its influence to alter this situation. (BM Scholarship: 10 October 1978)

We often see the trustees trying to push the Museum to develop much
broader scholarship approach and more diverse range of publications, sometimes against the Keepers’ priorities.

[The Keepers] regard the production of scholarly catalogue as being the foundation of the BM’s intellectual reputation. They are conscious that production of a catalogue is a high point in a curator’s career.

(BM Scholarship: 28 February 1980)

It is only in the 1990s, with the publication of the first British Museum Research Register 1991-1993, which was ‘produced to provide information about the nature of the research being undertaken by the Museum’, that the broader definition of the British Museum’s research starts to take shape as something that is ‘reflected in every aspect of the Museum’s work’ (BM 1994: 1). At this time, the new and much broader definitions of ‘collection-based research’ start to emerge. The Museum also starts to develop a research question driven direction for its research, while taking ‘the collection as its starting point’ (BM 1994:3). The collection-based research starts to integrate ‘the desire to understand more about a particular society and to learn more about cultural differences and interaction between different societies’ (BM 1994: 3). The broad research themes are further broken into the topics of interest, which include ‘knowledge about daily life, the development of science and technology, system of religious belief, the role and function of prestige items, and trade and other economic links between different cultures’ (BM 1994: 3). Research functions described include excavations and fieldwork, publications, provision of research facilities and assistance for scholars studying objects at the British Museum, research underpinning exhibitions, and involvement of the Museum’s staff with PhD supervision, contribution to university undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and serving as members of academic committees and learned societies (BM 1994: 5-11).
6.5 Publications at the centre of research governance

6.5.1 Publication backlogs

*It is a matter which has exercised the present writer over some fifteen years of annual reports as to what is a reasonable rate of publication for a curator in a busy department, and what form those publications should take. The Board and the Scholarship Committee will obviously be aware of widely differing views and practices in different departments of the British Museum. In large departments it is possible for a senior curator to aim for a major exhibition every 5 years or more, properly (in a scholarly sense) prepared for with a series of scholarly papers, and usually supported by research assistance. In a small one such as Japanese Antiquities, such a rate of production might quickly lead to concerns about viability, and we do perhaps sometimes feel the need to try harder. (BM Scholarship: 13 December 1993. From the Report to the Committee on Scholarship, by LRH Smith, Keeper of the Department of Japanese Antiquities)*

The sentiment in the above quote was and remains central to curatorial research practice at the British Museum and for many similar organisations (for the contemporary curatorial and institutional views on publishing research outcomes see Appendix D, pages 508 & 513). The organisational focus on publishing research at the British Museum conforms with other research environments, such as universities. However, when John Pope-Hennessey arrived at the British Museum and started the Scholarship Committee, the Museum’s publishing was in a difficult phase. Lord Annan as the Chair of the Scholarship Committee judged the Museum’s publication activity to be ‘narrowly scholastic and of limited appeal’ (BM Scholarship: 19 June 1975). The Committee’s key role, especially in the first years of its existence, was to increase a low level of research activity and to deal with a range of difficulties related to the Museum’s publications. The publishing issues were evident in the Keepers’ initial reports to the Scholarship Committee (BM Scholarship: 24 October 1974), with similar reports made in the subsequent years. A typical
report, such as one submitted by McLeod, Keeper of Ethnography, expressed ‘concern at the low level of scholarly activity intended for publication in his department’, due to ‘the increase in the volume of public enquiries as well as the upheaval attendant upon moving a very large collection to new locations’ (BM Scholarship: 3 March 1977).

Other issues dealt by the Scholarship Committee were connected to specific situations and individuals, such as the case of Rupert Bruce-Mitford and the Sutton Hoo research and catalogue production (BM Scholarship: 8 June 1976). Described by Wilson as ‘a stubborn and devious man, a scholar of international repute but limited vision, who irritated practically everyone he worked with’ (Wilson 2002: 289), Bruce-Mitford’s work was progressing so sluggishly that the trustees appointed a special Sub-Committee in 1968 to manage this situation. At first led by a succession of eminent archaeologists, Stuart Piggott, Kathleen Kenyon and Mortimer Wheeler, it was eventually taken over by Lord Fletcher, who produced a detailed report for the Scholarship Committee after the delayed Volume I of the Sutton Hoo catalogue was published in 1975 (Bruce-Mitford 1975). Wilson described the catalogue as ‘a triumph of detail, perhaps over-elaborate and, in some respects blinkered’ (Wilson 2002: 289). Lord Fletcher’s report stated –

*Volume I of the Sutton Hoo publication has at long last been published and will no doubt be rightly acclaimed as a notable work of scholarship. Satisfaction at its appearance must be tempered with disappointment at the long delay in publication. The Trustees should also know that the cost to the Museum during the last 12 years or so that this book has been in preparation is of the order of £250,000. This includes the salaries of substantial staff (varied from time to time) who have been engaged, largely whole time but some part time, on the preparation, and includes cost of excavation and considerable travelling overseas. The current cost is running at about £40,000 p.a.*

*...It reveals a sad story of continuous and often quite inexcusable delays; promises repeatedly made and repeatedly broken; assurances as to future timetables that have invariably proved false.*

*(BM Scholarship: 8 June 1976)*
The third volume of the Sutton Hoo catalogue appeared only in 1983 (Bruce-Mitford & Evans 1983). This long and painful process was certainly not a rare occurrence - for example, Dr Kent, Keeper of Department of Coins and Medals reported to the Scholarship Committee in 1985 that –

Dr Price has been working on the Catalogue of Coins of Alexander the Great for some twenty years, and its finalisation has been frustrated more than once by the appearance of important new evidence and total re-thinks as to arrangement and interpretation.

(BM Scholarship: 18 December 1985)

On the basis of its first four meetings, the Scholarship Committee was ‘not entirely encouraged by what it had found’, concluding that ‘in too many areas the Museum’s experts appeared to be inferior to those to be found elsewhere’. The Committee reported a ‘feeling of slight disappointment with the Museum’s research record’ and that there was a widening quality gap between the Museum’s research and research done in universities. The Committee especially questioned ‘the assumption that the end-product of research in the Museum should always be a catalogue or monograph’, suggesting that ‘publication on a smaller and less expensive scale might in some cases be more appropriate’ (BM Scholarship: 3 March 1977).
6.5.2 Quality of curatorial scholarship and competing demands

It is evident from the Scholarship Committee records that the British Museum was grappling with several overlapping issues affecting the quality and efficiency of its research and publication process – a range of staffing performance issues with some of the Museum’s curatorial experts underperforming or not following the advances happening in the broader academic environment, the rise in competing demands for curatorial time in relation to exhibitions and other public-related duties, the rising costs of publication, as well as a change in the formats and quality of academic publications due to the increasingly professionalised university research and new technology developments. These issues were further compounded by financial constraints, which become more significant during the 1980s and came to a crisis point in the 1990s, following a long period of underfunding over the post-war period, but also inefficient institutional management (Edwards 1996 unpublished; Cossens 1991; Zan 2000; also see page 227).

In terms of the issues related to the state of curatorial body, Wilson noted that Pope-Hennessy’s directorship included dealing with ‘curatorial satrapy’, including the departments being too keen to guard their independence, resisting collaboration and being managed (Wilson 2002: 243). Pope-Hennessy himself refers to ‘apathy, lack of initiative, and intellectual sluggishness’ (Pope-Hennessy 1991: 225). He described the research situation he found as follows –

*Before I became director of the museum, I used, like other outsiders, to feel exasperated that it seemed to contribute so much less in the museum field than other institutions. Its stock-in-trade was research, and to people like myself, who had always taken scholarship for granted and for whom knowledge was not a value but a currency, it all seemed very odd. My first discovery was that the museum seemed to contribute relatively little because it was so organized that it could not possibly contribute more. It was a federation of semi-autonomous departments, not a museum in a unitary sense.*

(Pope-Hennessy 1991: 214-5)
Recalling this same period, Jacobs tells us about a high level of personal animosity between staff affecting the Museum’s functioning (Jacobs 2010: 124-126). He also notes that Pope-Hennessy was not popular with all staff, and that he took ‘more interest than his predecessors in the appointment and grading of the curatorial staff’ (Jacobs 2010: 128). Despite the resistance, Pope-Hennessy succeeded in appointing six Deputy Keepers and two Keepers based on scholarly merit through advertising and open competition (Wilson 2002: 297-298; Pope-Hennessy 2016-7).

While the need to increase staff expertise overall is one of the areas of the Scholarship Committee’s interests, the most frequent feature of the Keepers’ reports to the Committee is that of delayed publication due to other demands. For example, Neil Stratford, Keeper of Medieval and Later Antiquities and one of Pope-Hennessy’s controversial outside appointees, comments on Mr Tait’s heavy burden of exhibition commitments, delaying his work on the Waddesdon Bequest catalogue, a collection of around 300 objects, which was left to the British Museum in 1898 by Baron Rothschild -

Mr Tait’s scholarly predicament is only one symptom of a problem which faces all curatorial members of the Department, namely, how to continue their research whilst meeting an increasing demand from the public in terms of exhibitions. (BM Scholarship: 10 October 1978)

This issue remains a constant feature of research at the British Museum and many other museums, especially in the institutions where research remains integrated within curatorial jobs. The Scholarship Committee discussed a range of options that could help with this issue - from a suggestion to increase a number of research assistants to setting up a leave system and increasing collaboration with universities - but the majority of these options were rejected due to lack of resources (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998).

6.5.3 Evolving publication challenges

The archival documentation shows that the British Museum was acutely aware of the constantly increasing level of activities requiring publication,
especially in relation to archaeology, which was also debated as a national issue. In 1992 the Scholarship Committee debated the paper *Archaeological publication, archives and collections: towards a National Policy* (Carver et al. 1992), which was prepared following a workshop held at the Society of Antiquaries in May 1991, and which notes that rapidly increasing intensity of archaeological activity is ‘putting pressure on the infrastructure of the discipline’ with publications falling behind and museums finding it difficult ‘to cope with the volumes of material offered for curation’ (BM Scholarship: 25 June 1992). This issue affected the British Museum deeply, as was evident in the report written by Ian Longworth, Keeper of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities, where he described a range of material excavated during the Runnymede Bridge Research Project, resulting in upwards of 500,000 artefacts, and which he envisaged being published in eight volumes of fascicules to provide a base for further research (BM Scholarship: 6 November 1989). In this example, the Scholarship Committee was anxious to contain the cost and expressed its concerns about high cost of publishing the extreme mass of material uncovered in this excavation. However, we also find that some members of the Committee championed certain publication causes. For example, in this instance, Professor Rosemary Cramp, one of the Committee members, advocated for ‘the importance of an adequate and worthy publication of the Runnymede Bridge excavation’ (BM Scholarship: 25 June 1990).

Publication of collections and catalogues of all kinds was discussed by the Scholarship Committee in detail, department by department, throughout the Committee’s existence. Appendix D (see page 513) discusses in more detail the Committee’s work in this area.

While computing is discussed throughout the Scholarship Committee’s existence, including introduction of new technologies in publication process (BM Scholarship: 17 May 1984, BM Scholarship: 14 June 1984). We see how new technologies began to change publishing formats, but also that the early opportunities afforded by computers did not significantly relieve financial and time pressures, almost foreshadowing the big issue of our own age of the growing difficulties in dealing with the exponential growth of research
The Scholarship Committee stops discussing publication issues in detail, almost abruptly, from 1999, as they move their focus on preparing for an external peer review of the Museum’s research (BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999). The reason for this sudden change is a range of new strategic and reorganisation processes that the Museum experienced between 1999 and 2001, and which are described in the next section. Consequently, during 2000 the Committee’s focus moved almost completely onto the preparation of the Museum Plan (BM Scholarship: 16 February 2000), a major corporate document which was to define the British Museum’s strategy and priorities as the Museum’s financial crisis reached its peak due the cost of the Great Court construction and ongoing operation, which is also described in more detail later. The Museum Plan captured the importance of research and publishing activity, including defining their role in relation to the organisational purposes and responsibilities. As a part of work done on the Museum Plan the publication process was defined as an integral part of the Museum’s custodianship of its collections –

The scholarly reputation of the British Museum rests on its publications and must have high standards of quality and effectiveness. We will continue to publish authoritative catalogues of the collections, excavation reports, conference proceedings and the results of other significant research. The results of some research will continue to be made available in academic journals that are published outside the Museum, either in hard copy or on line. Other research will be published by the British Museum Company in the most appropriate way, either in a conventional form or electronically. (BM Scholarship: 16 February 2000)

The situation regarding the Museum’s publications today is defined in line with the IRO status of the British Museum, and the organisation continues to view publication as an essential part of its research, as captured in the interviews for this study -
The British Museum Press is not any longer in existence. It has been wound up. Internally we still have the research publication series, which used to be called occasional papers. And we have a relationship with Thames & Hudson. They do our exhibition catalogues for us and they publish some other books. But there is an expectation that staff are expected to write. That is a part of job description. (Interview G2.01)

Wilson (2002) describes the original state of the Museum Publications as an initially loss-making department, which required a significant level of change in the early 1970s when it was incorporated as a separate company. British Museum Publications started operating as a separate company in 1972. (Wilson 2002: 280). The new company was beset by debts and financial difficulties, as well as managerial challenges in relation to its required arms-length status from the British Museum, especially during the directorship of Pope-Hennessy (Wilson 2002: 281). This further complicated the work of the Scholarship Committee, which was attended by directors of British Museum Publications, bringing their own financial challenges and pressures to those experienced by the curatorial departments.

The challenging situation for the British Museum Publications turned around after the decision was made to build a larger general publishing list in addition to scholarly works, and to pay royalties to external authors and any contributing staff who wrote more general books in their own time (Wilson 2002: 282). This meant that the British Museum Publications built significant reserve funds by 2001 and were able to contribute £4.9 million to the appeal for the construction of the Great Court (Wilson 2002: 282). However, in 2016, as seen in the interview quote above, the British Museum partnered with Thames & Hudson to provide its publishing activities. Thames & Hudson started their Museum and Institutional publishing division, and this partnership arrangement was also taken up by V&A, Imperial War Museum and National Maritime Museum (Onwuemezi 2016).
However, the more traditional curatorial publishing practices and the related issues have not gone away, with the challenges of recording and publishing one’s collection remaining a considerable undertaking and a balancing act involving financial, time management and reputational issues (Interview G1.05), which still connects us to the matters and situations debated by the Scholarship Committee during its existence.

The work of the Scholarship Committee up to the mid 1990s shows that the British Museum was battling to find new ways to organize, record and disseminate its research, to address the decline of its research functions and to attend to a range of institutional issues related to curatorial work (Pope-Hennessy 1991: 214-5, Wilson 2002: 297-9). The issue of publications can be seen as a lens that shows us the difficulties arising as the Museum attempts to modernise its research functions. Further discussion regarding publication of research in the UK national cultural organisations is explored in Appendix D.
The British Museum crisis that unfolded in 2023, as this work was nearing its completion, is centered on the alleged theft of thousands of objects from the British Museum (Dex 2023; McIntosh 2023; House of Commons 2023). While the speculation of how and why this happened is far from concluded at the time of writing, it is beyond doubt that a significant contributing factor was the Museum’s failure to catalogue and describe its collections. The issues that we have been describing in this chapter in regard to the lack of capacity, time and focus to enable publication and recording of the Museum’s collections has created the conditions that made this disastrous turn of events possible. The emerging solution is seen as a full digitisation of collection, which could take up to five years and cost about £10 million (Dex 2023; House of Commons 2023: Q15). While this is a great aspiration, it will also be important that the British Museum considers the complexities of management of digital systems and assets, as well as other management issues that might have contributed to this situation such as de-prioritising the types of research enabling recording and publication of its collections.
6.6 Research during financially challenging times

6.6.1 Difficulties and strategic change during the 1990s

During the 1990s, the evolving discussions about research at the Scholarship Committee meetings were taking place against the background of ‘the overall reduction of resources available to the museum’, with the trustees ‘being concerned that this may begin to show through in the range and output of research within the curatorial and scientific departments’ (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998). The areas of growing concern included a perception of a growing gap in the kind of research taking place in the Museum with the research being done in universities, and how this might affect the quality and reputation of research produced at the British Museum. The departure of the British Library with its irreplaceable resources, which were integrated within the British Museum from its foundation, was also a constant worry intellectually and financially. Another issue included the prolonged work on the Great Court, which was diverting both resources and organisational attention away from research (BM Keepers: 13 December 1997; BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998). Research was also a discussion theme closely connected with the Keepers’ ‘deep worries’, expressed at this time, ‘about the way that a new “management culture” might transform the traditional values of the Museum’ and their desire ‘to preserve the Museum as we know it’ (BM Keepers: 11 January 1996).

A substantive paper about research at the British Museum, developed at this time by John Mack, Keeper in Department of Ethnography, and Andrew Burnett, Keeper in Department of Coins and Medals, stated –

We see the integration of the curatorial responsibilities for the collections and advancing their understanding as a great strength of the British Museum structure. (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998)

This paper is one of many developed at this time because of internal financial and strategic pressures, but also because of the new research models that were being deployed elsewhere, most notably at the V&A and the
Natural History Museum (Interviews G2.02; G3.03), and which started separating curatorial roles from the roles focused solely on research. Integration of research with curatorial roles was stressed as being important for the British Museum, and this remains an important characteristic of how the British Museum understands its research functions to this day (see Chapter 4, page 111).

Mack and Burnett (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998) attempted to define the British Museum’s research and proposed a range of practical solutions to strengthen research functions. Their recommendations ranged from suggesting the widening of research interests into areas of political, social, and cultural relevance, to increasing the Museum’s spending on libraries, travel budgets, and to setting up a visiting scholar scheme (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998). Mack and Burnett’s paper covering these issues led to a wider organisational discussion, including a series of internal workshops engaging the broader curatorial body in defining the role of research at the British Museum (BM Keepers: 7 July 1997; BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999). The discussions also resulted in the first external peer review of the British Museum research, which took place at the end of 1998, with its main event held on 15 March 1999 (BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999).

In parallel to Mack and Burnett, John Curtis, Keeper of Wester Asiatic Antiquities, developed An Excavation and Fieldwork Policy for the British Museum (BM Scholarship 1999 archival). The first version of this policy was written in 1991, and then reviewed in 1999, when the Committee on Excavation and Fieldwork merged with the Scholarship Committee. This document examined how the Museum’s excavations and fieldwork related to acquisition of material, obtaining background information about material already in the Museum, publications, as well as other outcomes such as improved relations with foreign countries (BM Scholarship: 16 February 2000). This policy shared its key features with other policy work done by the Scholarship Committee at this time, representing an attempt to define the key characteristics of excavation and fieldwork done by the British Museum, its key benefits, scope, and principles. This substantive new body of research related
policies fed into the Museum’s cross-organisational strategy making effort, which was happening between 1999 and 2001, as the British Museum attempted to manage organisational change, its priorities and its financial and operational difficulties arising during the final stages of the Great Court completion (BM Trustee: 27 November 1999). The impact of this crisis is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

In relation to the final years of the Scholarship Committee, before it is transformed into the new Research Committee, in the available records we can see that there was a significant and sudden change of tone and dynamic starting around 1999, with a burst of activity aiming to link research with the development of the new Museum Plan. This strategic document was developed by Suzanna Taverne, the Museum’s Managing Director between 1999 and 2001 (Wilson 2002: 299; Watson-Smyth 1999). In this period the British Museum found itself with an uncomfortable management arrangement, in addition to a range of operational and financial difficulties (BM Trustees: 24 April 1999; 26 June 1999). The archival records show attempts to develop and explain this new management structure, including attempts to define the division of responsibilities between Robert Anderson, who was in the post as Director since 1992, and the newly arrived Managing Director, Suzanna Taverne. In the corporate documentation there is an emphasis on ensuring ‘a proper balance between achieving the Museum’s intellectual purpose and its operational needs’ (BM Keepers: 1 June 1999). The Museum Plan development brought in a new language of the boardroom and the New Labour’s cultural policy, looking to ‘regard the Museum as a social enterprise’, to ‘build on its assets’, to ensure ‘cultural enrichment, inspiration, enlightenment and enjoyment’ (BM Scholarship: 16 February 2000).

These changes had a significant impact on the Museum’s staff, who were concerned that –

*Every attempt should be made to ensure that core activities (e.g. research, excavations, other fieldwork, publications, special exhibitions) were kept going. (BM Keepers: 13 December 1997)*

The Keepers Committee discussed the need for the corporate strategy
making processes to be based on a set of ‘overarching principles’ that would constitute ‘a statement for use by all the management of principles governing the intellectual vision of the museum’ (BM Keepers 12 and 26 August 1999). Hence, the Museum Plan was supplemented by the Intellectual Strategy, developed by Robert Anderson, the Museum’s Director, and the Keepers. The Intellectual Strategy reads almost like a competing vision to the Museum Plan, extolling the vision of the Museum based around the care of collections ‘which are or stand among the most important in their fields in the world’, defining the Museum’s five intellectual foundations as care for the objects, understanding of the objects, interpretation of the collection, presentation and bringing in new insights (BM Keepers: 16 December 1999).

The Scholarship Committee records from this time overflow with the assertions that the collections are at the centre of the British Museum and that curatorial roles are a part of this essential purpose (BM Scholarship: 16 February 2000, 8 June 2000, 10 November 2000; BM Keepers: 19 October 2000). While all this sounds uncontroversial and on the face of it straightforward, these relentless attempts to define research and curatorship recorded by the Scholarship and Keeper Committees in 1999 and 2000 increasingly sound like the last point of defence from the incoming crisis and the new managerial solutions, and especially the pending job cuts. The Museum’s official documentation from this time contains multiple attempts to define and describe the purpose of the Museum’s intellectual and curatorial work, including a range of new policies – on Acquisitions, Loans, Display, Storage, Conservation and Documentation, Fieldwork and Excavation (BM Scholarship: 8 June 2000). These new policies were documenting the existing practice and placing them in the new strategic context. One of the interviewees described this process as continuing in the early 2000s as follows –

*I think, modernise is the word I would use for the Museum, because in an institution circa 2000-2005 you have to have all these policies in place because that is what you have to do, and the BM didn’t. I think that is what they set out to do, is to modernise and justify what the Museum is actually doing rather than actually changing it greatly.*

*(Interview G2.04)*
And then, the documented records of the Scholarship Committee stop with the last meeting recorded on 26 June 2001, amidst discussion on the plans for a new peer review of the Museum’s publications and the discussions regarding the Occasional Paper no. 146 regarding the 1930s controversial cleaning of the Parthenon Marbles and the international conference held at this time on the subject (BM Scholarship: 4 December 2001, Jenkins 2001). We can see why this happened from the Minutes of the Board of Trustees, where we find that the newly arrived Director, Neil MacGregor, started reviewing the problematic management structure, (BM Trustees: 26 January 2002), resulting in a departure of Suzanna Taverne (Wilson 2002: 299), but also the change in how the Board of Trustees and its Committees work (BM Trustees 30 November 2002). A British Museum interviewee described it as follows –

All the structure of the Committees changed by 2002 or 2003, when Neil became a new Director and we got a new Chairman shortly after. And it was obvious to everybody that the Scholarship Committee was really like a bit of management, really. And they were very keen to move the Trustees away from management and into longer-term policy and strategy. So, that is really when the Scholarship Committee started looking into things like policy rather than just managing a direction of publications. (Interview G2.04)

There was also a new strategic approach brought in by the new Director. We can get a feel of the direction of travel from the minutes of the Board of Trustees discussing the emerging new strategic direction with the new Director –

By returning to the notion of universality as the essential underpinning of its future approach to collecting and its response to restitution claims, the British Museum would be unique in that it was possible in one building for the public to see objects in a global, cultural context. In that sense, the Museum could be understood as the place where ‘the world discovered the world’. (BM Trustees: 23 February 2002)

These records provide an insight in how MacGregor’s return to a notion
of universal museum and re-telling of world history through objects is directly linked to the British Museum’s policies on its future collecting and restitution, as well as interpretation. The Museum’s records from this point on give us much more carefully managed picture of the Museum, including its research functions, reduced to the occasional entries such as this one -

Jeremy Hill presented his paper, Research at the British Museum 2005 to 2007. The Board endorsed the central importance of good research for the Museum and the importance of recruiting and retaining good research staff. (BM Trustees: 3 July 2008)

We have come a long way from the trustees’ outspoken praise and admonishment of the Keepers’ research and publication efforts in the 70s and the 80s, or the effort to define the Museum’s understanding of research in the 90s. From 2002 onwards the British Museum finds a more corporate, and, by extension, more controlled and opaque way of presenting its vision and purpose, and of recoding its internal decision-making processes.
6.6.2  Key events at the British Museum 1992-2001: summary table

Figure 10 below shows key events investigated in this chapter. Figure 10 brings together key governmental changes with the major changes and events at the British Museum. The table enables us to see chronology and contemporariness of different events more easily, which is important for this discussion. It helps us to perceive the gradual unfolding of the British Museum’s organisational crisis described in this chapter. It also helps us to see the complexity of the unfolding events, so the argument is not reduced only to governmental funding cuts. Figure 10 presents a range of relevant factors such as the change of government and the new policy context, but also the organisational commitments and status of capital projects, additional pressure emanating from the adverse press headlines, and the changes in the organisational governance and strategy. It is the totality of these factors that can help us to understand the changes related to research functions during this time, and which is explored in the remainder of this chapter.

For example, we can see that *Lifting the Veil* report (Prescott & Gunn 1999) is published at the same time as the British Museum announces 90 curatorial posts redundant. Yet, we do not see this reflected in this report. The British Museum’s first peer review is also held at the same time as these redundancies are announced, helping us to see that the peer review is linked to showcasing research and defending against the loss of curatorial capacity, which was the basis of the Museum’s research excellence. A high volume of negative press articles throughout this period shows that this crisis had a very public face, no doubt adding to the organisational pressures. We also see that the change from the Conservative to the Labour government in 1997 does not significantly change the Museum’s trajectory of experiencing financial difficulties, indicating that there were other organisational reasons that had greater influence on these events than the government, and which will be further discussed in this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>British Museum</th>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>† Department for National Heritage (DNH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>† Conservative government, John Major</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>† Secretaries of State: David Mellor, Peter Brooke, Stephen Dorrell, Virginia Bottomley</td>
<td>† Treasures in Trust report, DNH Reductions to GIA announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>† Secretaries of State: David Mellor, Peter Brooke, Stephen Dorrell, Virginia Bottomley</td>
<td>Chair of Trustees:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David Hennessy, 3rd Baron (1986-1996) Windlesham</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graham Greene (1996-2002)</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>† Potential reductions in GIA and withdrawal of EJ contribution announced</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>† Edwards' Report</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>† Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)</td>
<td>† First Finance Director of BM appointed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>† BL leaves the Bloomsbury site</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DCMS considers changing status of national museums</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>† Secretaries of State: Chris Smith, Tessa Jowell</td>
<td>Managing Director:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Suzanne Tavere, (1999-2001)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neil MacGregor appointed as Director in early 2002, takes post in September 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>† Arts Ministers: Mark Fisher, Alan Howarth, Tessa Blackstone</td>
<td>† 90 posts redundant in curatorial areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>† 140 posts created in public facing areas</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>† Museum Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>† Industrial action threatened</td>
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<td></td>
<td>† PwC report on the use of ‘wrong’ stone for the Great Court</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>† The Great Court opened by the Queen</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>† Review of BM archaeology by Barry Cunliffe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>† Cost of running BM increased by £6.2m pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>† Study Centre project suspended</td>
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</tbody>
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Figure 10 - An overview of key events and developments at the British Museum between 1992 and 2000
One of the most significant differences between the research environment of the British Museum during the Scholarship Committee’s work from 1974 to 2001 and the research environment of the British Museum today is in the current stress on the importance of external funding for research and the policy of ‘buying out’ curatorial time for research. This is accompanied by the increased institutional confidence in being able to define and express value of the Museum’s research within its governance framework and strategy (Interviews G2.01, G1.05, G1.06: BM, Hill & Williams 2016, unpublished). This newly found confidence and the new research model is frequently connected by the British Museum staff to its status as an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) and the AHRC’s critical role in enabling its transformation (Interviews G2: 01, G2: 04). It is remarkable how quickly the change and embedding of the grant and project driven research system has taken place at the British Museum, even if we consider the effects of the IRO status. This is even more remarkable if we consider that the British Museum is a type of organisation inclined towards deep institutionalisation of its processes and structures (Thoeing 2011: 4) as we have seen in relation to its governance structures and its publication policies.

To fully understand this relatively quick change, it is important to spend some time considering the British Museum during the 1990s and consider how a series of crisis might have created ideal conditions for change. We can describe this point of the institutional crisis in the 1990s and the early 2000s as a critical juncture, as defined by historical institutionalists, providing a punctuated equilibria moment which is ‘shock-driven, sudden and radical enough to loosen path dependencies’ (Stark 2018: 24), while also acknowledging that such moment does not have be an ‘all or nothing big bang’, but can include a more gradual and incremental changes (Stark 2018: 26).

It is important to stress that this crisis moment had an institutional effect going beyond research, including the change of leadership, with the arrival of Neil MacGregor as the new Director in 2002, as well as the change in the trustees’ role moving from operational to more strategic areas. The new
approach introduced MacGregor’s new strategy positioning the British Museum as the place where ‘the world discovered the world’. (BM Trustees: 23 February 2002). We should also factor in the rapid rise in the British Museum’s public profile at this time and the fast increase of visitor numbers, attracted by blockbuster exhibitions, improved marketing and enhanced visitor experience (Statista 2018).

To identify and describe this critical juncture, it is necessary to investigate the issue of research at the British Museum during a period of pronounced financial strain taking place between 1992 and 2001, and which is described in both archival and published records (Edwards 1996 unpublished: S96-S107, Engel 1997, BM Trustees: 22 July 2000, Zan 2006). This financial crisis occurred due to a long period of governmental underfunding (Wilson 2002: 341-342), the loss of income from the British Library (Zan 2006: 31) and the inadequate planning for staff requirements for the implementation of the Great Court project (Zan 2006: 71). This led to voluntary and compulsory staff redundancies (BM Trustees: 30 October 1999), more than usual level of governmental scrutiny and interference (Wilson 2002: 342-343), and a period of negative media coverage (Smith 1996, Engel 1997).

This period is also marked by significant political complexity, at the time when the Conservative government’s long-term underfunding and commercialisation policies are followed by the funding increases by the New Labour after the 1997 election, but also by the introduction of the new cultural policies focusing on education, social inclusion, and regeneration (Labour Party 1997, DCMS 2000, BM Trustees 27 September 2001). The New Labour policies were linked to the new types of KPIs and reporting mechanisms that were seen as burdensome and inappropriate by the British Museum’s leaders (Wilson 2002, Anderson 2007). Wilson comments –

Performance indicators were introduced by civil servants with no knowledge of the museum profession. Some of these were ludicrous. How do you set targets for conservation? By counting the number of objects treated? You can conserve 200 iron nails in a week, but a decorated iron helmet may take months. (Wilson 2002: 342)
The British Museum’s archives reveal the acute financial pressure felt at the Museum in the 1980s under the regime of the Office of Arts and Libraries, which in 1985/86 reduced the Museum’s grant-in-aid from £1.7m to £1.4m ‘without any warning’ (Wilson 1990: 89), resulting in staff cuts, unfilled job vacancies, galleries closing and a rising need to generate income through more chargeable exhibitions (BM Trustees: 5 October 1985). The Museum’s funding and management situation became even more problematic in 1996, as reflected in the Edwards Review – *A Fundamental Review of the Museum’s Operations* – delivered in 1996 by Andrew Edwards, former deputy secretary to the Treasury, and commissioned by the Museum’s Trustees (Edwards 1996 unpublished; Zan 2000).

Edwards Review (Edwards 1996 unpublished) was written as a direct response to an expectation of the grant-in-aid cuts over period 1995/96 to 1999/2000, cumulatively including the intended cuts of 3.7 per cent reduction in 95/96, 6.8 per cent in 96/97, 11.9 per cent in 97/98, 17.6 per cent in 98/99 and 24 per cent in 1999/2000. The intended cuts were further compounded by a late realisation of the loss of the British Library’s receipt, amounting to £5.5m over the same period (Edwards unpublished 1996: 11.2.3 and figure 11.1). The Edwards Review responded to this situation by presenting two possible options – (A) deep cuts and underspends, including staff reductions of 25 per cent, rising to 33 per cent, and (B) smaller cuts and underspends with charging, reducing the proposed staff cuts to 15 per cent, rising to 20 per cent (Edwards unpublished 1996, boxes 11.2 and 11.3).

*Under Option B the Museum would introduce an admission charge as soon as possible, and certainly from April 1997. With the help of revenue from the change, the Museum should be able by the end of the period to make good all the ‘hidden deficit’ deficiencies discussed above on specialist managers, IT investment, maintenance, opening hours, gallery closures, public facilities and services, education and training and acquisitions. It should also be possible to limit staff reductions in the Curatorial departments to a lower figure in the region 15-20%, perhaps 15% initially rising to 20% later on. (Edwards unpublished 1996: S105)*
Edwards Review received a major critique by Zan for its vagueness and inconsistencies (Zan 2006: 39), especially the ways in which managerial rhetoric masks ideological stance in relation to the charging issue (Zan 2006: 59). Zan also explains Edward’s failure to attribute the root causes of this crisis to ‘the arbitrary reduction in government funding’ and not to the alleged inefficiencies or any other action taken by the Museum (Zan 2006: 49; Zan 2000: 238).

In places Edwards Review described and even praised the Museum’s research activity (Edwards unpublished 1996: 2.1.5., figure 2.1). For example, it described the British Museum as ‘a large and important academic institution as well as being a museum’ (Edwards unpublished 1996: 2.2.6). However, when Edwards recommended that the British Museum should attract new audiences and stimulate public excitement (Edwards unpublished 1996: 2.4.3), the Review presented these new activities in opposition to what it saw as the Museum’s old culture seeking to avoid any ‘vulgarity’, being focused solely on the image of excellence and the approval of scholars and scholarly journalists, while ‘less importance is attached to winning accolades of the less scholarly’ (Edwards unpublished 1996: 2.4.5). These two areas of activity – public entertainment and research - have been placed in direct conflict with each other in Edwards Review, in line with the historic tensions between these activities. Putting these activities in opposition to each other is in line with other contemporary arguments that tended to stress diverging and conflicting nature of serious scholarship versus public amusement, often described it as ‘disneyfication’ of museums (Lucas et. al. 1990). This conflict of different functions was often used in discussions at this time by museum professionals, politicians, civil servants, as well as journalists (Anderson 2007: 21; Watson-Smyth 1999; Nature 1990 a&b).

Research functions were seen as an essential and successful activity in Edwards Review, while at the same time being described as dominating, elitist and unaccountable in its use of resources, thus justifying a proposal for significant cuts in the staffing of curatorial departments (Edwards unpublished 1996: 9.5.16). Edwards rationale being –
…the Museum scholarship, hugely important as it is, is only one among the core activities of the Museum alongside looking after collections and presenting them to public. As one senior member of staff put it to me, there is no a priori reason why the Museum has to have (say) 100 distinguished scholars rather than (say) 80 or 120. (Edwards unpublished 1996: 9.5.15)

As we have seen the British Museum of this time did not have any policy frameworks that could answer these questions. The Scholarship Committee was still working to improve day to day efficiency of research publication processes. The big drive to create new strategies and policies did not start until 1999 and it was possibly influenced by the lessons learned from the Edwards Review.

In the case of Edwards Review, after its publication the British Museum managed to avoid implementing its more drastic recommendations, such as curatorial staff reduction. It seems that the report, while reputationally damaging, did not achieve sufficient political resonance with the government or with the Museum’s trustees for its recommendations to be implemented. Even though these recommendations were not implemented, the British Museum’s fortunes temporarily improved in the next couple of years, not through the implementation of Edwards Review, but due to the Government’s recognition of the Museum’s claim for the loss of the British Library’s receipt leading to obtaining additional funding, but also a combination of less drastic cost reductions, income generation and better financial management. All of this led to a temporary improvement in the British Museum’s finances, thus avoiding any additional large-scale cuts in curatorial posts as recommended by Edwards (Zan 2006: 66-67). However, Edwards Review paints a valuable picture of the Museum’s financial and organisational difficulties related to funding, as well as how any perceived tensions between its public and research functions could become one of the deciding prioritisation factors when deciding how to redistribute its shrinking resources.
The apparent improvements of the British Museum’s financial position after Edwards Review were all too brief and in 1999/2000 there was a new financial crisis unfolding. The trustees were again discussing the major difficulties, including a renewed pressure to introduce access charging (BM Trustees: 27 February 1999). The new crisis attracted additional scrutiny from the government, leading to the appointment of Suzanna Taverne as Managing Director, which was already mentioned (BM Trustees: 27 February 1999; Watson-Smyth 1999). Wilson tells us that this happened ‘after much discussion and internal wringing of hands, at the insistence of the Department of Culture Media and Sport’ (Wilson 2002: 298-299).

Taverne’s appointment was extensively reported in the press, with the Independent telling us that she will ‘take over the role of accounting officer, a title traditionally held by a director’, a post that was never held by anyone with
financial background as traditionally an academic would have been chosen (Watson-Smyth 1999). This reporting was only partly true because this post was new and never existed before, so it was not previously held by either an academic or non-academic. Also, Taverne did not replace Anderson, who continued in the post of Director till 2002 (Wilson 2002: 299). Judged by the press reports, the whole episode gave an impression of the Museum’s opaqueness regarding its financial and management problems, but also academic elitism on one side and managerialist and dumbing down on the other side (Alberge 1999, Ellis 2000; Lister 2001). Different controversial issues overlapped in the press. For example, Ellis started his article with the affair of the use of the wrong stone on the Museum’s portico, the controversy linked to the Great Construction with the wrong type of stone being used in its construction, but then moved to question the new populist direction of the Museum’s exhibition programming, asking –

_Has one of Britain’s most respected institutions defected to show business or become, at best, a kind of ethnographic planetarium? (Ellis 2000)_

The ways in which a ‘high-flying’ business woman is contrasted with academic men, and also how these narratives deploy the concepts of elitist scholarship, contrasted with the also undesirable managerialism and populism could be compared to a similar set of circumstances at the V&A under Elizabeth Esteve-Coll only few years previously (Adams 2010).

This new crisis, however, did mean that the loss of curatorial posts was now inevitable. But, at the same time, the new posts were required to be created to enable the expanded public offer at the about-to-be-opened Great Court. In October 1999, the Board of Trustees records document how Taverne responded to the questions from one of the trustees – Professor Gillian Beer - as to how the Museum would create 150 new posts in the Great Court and whether there would be redundancies (BM Trustees: 30 October 1999) –

_Ms Taverne said that 70 new posts would be warding, learning and janitor positions, the remainder would be middle or senior management level in marketing, public affairs, education, IT and_
visitor services. To be able to create these posts the Museum needed to reduce posts in the existing structure by 90. This down-sizing would be represented by a 10% reduction in staff in the curatorial departments, and a 30% reduction in staff in the operational departments. In so far as possible, it was intended to redeploy staff into suitable alternative employment within the new structure. It was anticipated that there would be curatorial staff, for example, lacking relevant experience in education or marketing, who could nevertheless be re-trained because they would have the right personal attributes for some of the new positions. However there was a realistic likelihood that between thirty and fifty people would not find new positions within the Museum.

(BM Trustees: 30 October 1999)

This statement makes it clear that this is not just about cuts, but about specific cuts of curatorial and operational posts, while the new posts are being created in the areas that are necessary for the Great Court to become fully functional. Wilson (2002), however, describes the cuts in the context of the government long-term underfunding, while being against any loss of curatorial posts –

Then in 1999 even more draconian steps were taken when a number of staff redundancies were enforced. Among the jobs abolished were curatorial posts, the loss of which could not be easily borne. Managers and public relations staff were brought in on a substantial scale as a consequence of these savings, often at higher salary scales than those allowed under the old dispensations. (Wilson 2002: 342)

Wilson does not tell us who has enforced these ‘draconian steps’, but his account implies that the government is at fault, with civil servants with no knowledge of museums introducing ludicrous performance indicators, forcing the impossible judgements ‘for no other reason than because they held the purse-strings’ (Wilson 2002: 342). Wilson (2002: 342) asks - ‘Does a career-long catalogue of a school of Indian sculpture count for less than three educational books?’ In this example Wilson himself is contrasting and putting in direct competition an outcome of research and a public-facing educational
outcome. All of this has contributed to re-enforcing the narrative of tensions between these different types of museum functions. Wilson describes an externally led takeover by the nameless forces ofmanagerialism and the increase in the government’s interference at the British Museum, which values the new type of managerial posts more than curatorial jobs and the core functions of the Museum (Wilson 2002: 341-4). A very similar narrative has been deployed by Robert Anderson, who is very explicit in his criticism of the British Government agenda for museums, which in his view endangers research (Anderson 2007: 300).

Anderson (2005, 2007) and Wilson (2002) were correct regarding the negative influence of government underfunding, including a premise that during financially difficult times those activities favoured by government will do better as institutions seek to protect scarce financial resources, and thus affecting research in the UK heritage organisations. We have certainly seen the evidence of this in the above British Museum example. However, it is not entirely helpful that these statements (Anderson 2005, 2007; Wilson 2002) are seen as a sole explanation of the British Museum’s situation at the end of the 1990s. These views tend to obfuscate a set of specific circumstances at the British Museum, mostly caused by the issues surrounding the final implementation of the Great Court project. It is not the government policy or even the government underfunding that caused the Great Court overspends, the need for expensive remedial works and the lack of planning for adequate staffing for the Great Court (Smith 1996; Zan 2000, 2006).

The Board of Trustees records provide us with a detailed picture of the institutional decision-making process and the roles played by the trustees, Robert Anderson as Director, and Suzanna Taverne as Managing Director during this crisis. Of course, these records do not provide us with a complete picture, as a great deal of information has not been recorded, including any undocumented conversations between the Museum and DCMS. However, the available records do provide us with enough evidence to understand some aspects of the unfolding events. For example, we find that, amidst the crisis, the trustees did express their concerns about impact of cuts and changes on research, and that the trustees asking these questions are mostly the trustees
engaged with the Scholarship Committee. Lord Renfrew expressed his concern that research is omitted in the objectives of the Museum Plan, a major document that was developed at the time as a single-view management tool for the Museum. He was reassured by Director and Finance Director that the research is subsumed under salaries and that it remains one of the prime objectives, which had been conveyed to the government (BM Trustees: 24 April 1999). When Professor Gillian Beer asked about the proposed cuts, she was also reassured by Director that the re-structuring will not jeopardise the curatorial excellence. Further reassurance came from John Mack, who is Senior Curator at this time, saying that there will be even ‘the opportunities to affect favourably the age profiles within some curatorial departments’, which ‘should enhance their performance’ (BM Trustees: 30 October 1999). Mack’s comment is a rare glimpse that there is also an intention to make structural changes in the Museum’s research and utilise the crisis as an opportunity to continue dealing with the historic underperformance in certain curatorial areas. The Board of Trustees minutes show that the Museum’s decisions and actions in relation to research, including the reductions in curatorial staff, were defended by Robert Anderson as Director and other senior curatorial staff, such as John Mack, and not by Taverne herself (BM Trustees: 24 April 1999, 30 October 1999).

We have to take into account that this crisis is taking place despite the Chancellor of Exchequer announcing at the time that the funding allocation to the Museums and Galleries sector would rise by 5.9% per annum over the period 2000/01 – 2003/04 (BM Trustees: 22 July 200). Even with this projected rise in income, the trustees continue to worry that this rise might not be sufficient to increase the British Museum’s income to the level that had been assumed in the Museum Plan as necessary to finalise the Great Court project and transform the Museum’s programming and activity to fit with the new, expanded building (BM Trustees: 22 July 2000). In addition -

*Lord Renfrew suggested that the risks affecting scholarly publications, excavation and fieldwork and outreach required further development. Ms Taverne said that these matters were identified in the 160 items underlying the 30 categories of risk articulated in the table attached to*
her report. However, a task for each standing committee would be to consider whether all risks were rightly identified.

(BM Trustees: 22 July 2000: 6777)

As we have seen, the previous financial crisis during Edwards Review (1996 unpublished), and also Taverne’s appointment, have generated numerous narratives about hostility to research (Smith 1996; Ellis 2000; Lister 2001). The press accounts continued to reinforce the rhetoric and issues that were previously raised in Edwards Review in terms of conflicting old academic elite vision of the Museum and the new more public orientated, but populist future (Ellis 2000, Lister 2001). These messages sometimes tended to obscure the facts behind the more immediate financial issues related to the Great Court. This was done not only by the press, but these narratives were also deployed by the British Museum’s senior staff at the time and afterwards. The senior staff accounts tended to emphasise the overall effects of the governmental cuts and interference as we have seen in the accounts provided by Wilson (2002) and Anderson (2005, 2007). As Wilson and Anderson were both the Museum’s Directors, the narrative of government underfunding and wrong policies must have been a better explanation for the eventual loss of curatorial jobs and the deepening crisis than poor management. Especially as they were both the great proponents of the values of research. The evidence, however, suggests that these issues at the British Museum were the issues of poor management within the institution, exacerbated by the issues of chronic underfunding (Edwards 1996 unpublished; BM Trustees 1985-1996, 1998-2001; Zan 2000, 2006).

Zan (2006) shows us how the Edwards Review arguments were redeployed at the time when they were not any longer relevant and how the strength of public and institutional feeling regarding cultural, social and institutional factors was used in different narratives, in the way that presented a new crisis of the Great Court as the old crisis of underfunding captured in Edwards Review, thus leading to ‘forgetting’ the organisational consequences of the Great Court (Zan 2006: 71). This situation shows an example of how a loss of curatorial posts and research capacity can occur at the time of financial difficulty and organisational change, regardless if this is a result of
governmental underfunding and policy, or a result of institutional choices and decision making process. We also see that institutions sometimes try to hide their internal decision-making processes and problems by emphasising governmental factors.

In the case of the British Museum, during this time the Museum lost 90 curatorial posts, but it also created 130 new posts related to its public functions (Zan 2006: 71). This meant an overall increase of jobs in managerial, public facing and marketing areas. The archival records show that, when it comes to this particular situation, even with the previous underfunding and damaging governmental policies acknowledged, this did not happen because of any specific new governmental development, but due to the fact that the Great Court costs were greater than envisaged (BM Trustees: 27 February 1999, 27 March 1999, 31 July 1999), and, also, that the Great Court as a new public space in central London with its new spaces and services, required adequate staffing. This change of staffing profile was not included in the planning for the Great Court but was added in close to the project completion, thus leading to the loss of curatorial posts (BM Trustees: 30 October 1999). This situation as such was a result of institutional, and not governmental, processes and decision-making. This shows us that the institutional financial and organisational issues were a significant factor influencing the decline of research functions at the British Museum at the end of the 1990s.
6.7 Reform and formalisation of research functions at the British Museum

As we have seen, one characteristic of the British Museum research in the 1990s is that the Museum’s financial difficulties and structural changes are accompanied by a range of processes attempting to formalise research policies, processes, and activities through the development of official research documentation, such as strategies, purpose statements and plans with specific research objectives and KPIs. Different parts of research activity such as production of catalogues, research underpinning exhibitions, excavations and fieldwork are all defined and described during this time (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998). There is an emergence of new ways to record the Museum’s publication record, culminating in two Research Registers, covering the periods 1991-93 and 1994-96 (BM 1994 and 1997). The quality of the British Museum’s research is also scrutinised, with the British Museum first external peer review held in 1999, and an archaeology peer review completed in 2001. All this was done as a part of realisation that research needs to be represented in the overall re-alignment of organisational priorities and purposes (BM Scholarship: 10 November 2000, 26 June 2001). At times this includes a realisation that the previously dominant status of research and curatorship is being eroded, sometimes accompanied by strong feelings amongst curatorial staff that this course of events will diminish the British Museum’s reputation, its collections, expertise, and its public value (BM Keepers: 13 December 1997, 19 October 2000).

The momentum and ideas regarding changes to research functions were often instigated by the Scholarship Committee. Many change processes that were started by the Scholarship Committee continue to underpin the way in which the Museum’s research strategy functions today. For example, the discussions of the 1990s continue to underpin the Museum’s position that research should stay integrated within curatorial roles (Interview G2.01, BM Scholarship: 10 November 2000). Notwithstanding the importance of the IRO status, even the idea of strengthening research through the external, additional sources of funding goes back to the Scholarship Committee. We find it clearly articulated in the paper produced by Mack and Burnett in 1998 –
The only way to increase research time is to increase the amount of time available, and this can be done only by putting more money into it (with the possibility of outside funding alleviating the sums required).

(BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998)

The AHRC did not exist in its current form at this time, and the IRO status for museums did not come into being until 2004-05, indicating that the timing of these changes has been very fortuitous, serving the strategy already favoured by the British Museum and coming at the time when this was most needed.

One of the greatest changes that took place is formalisation of the strategy and processes related to research. While this can be seen as a part of the IRO process (Interview G2.01), we find that this change and formalisation process started much earlier. During 1999, as a part of managing the complexity of change and financial difficulties at the Museum, the Board of Trustees announced development of the Museum Plan, a document that would ‘primarily serve as a management tool to aid the running of the Museum’ (BM Trustees: 28 February 1999). The management structures were formalised through development of numerous documents underlining objectives and principles for every part of the Museum, from the top-level management principles and structures to the new curatorial objectives to ‘devise strategies and procedures for achieving goals and guiding practice with respect to acquisition, storage, research, excavation and fieldwork, exhibitions, loans, collection management and recording’ (BM Keepers: 17 June 1999). The suite of strategic documents included the Museum’s Intellectual Strategy with the vision to ‘illuminate the histories of cultures to present and future generations both in the United Kingdom and throughout the world’ (BM Keepers: 6 January 2000).

Another feature of the formalisation processes that started in the 1990s is the Museum’s attempts to seek external verification of quality of the Museum’s research, conducted through external peer review, which was initially agreed at the Scholarship Committee in 1997 (BM Scholarship: 20 May 1997), and which took place in 1999, structured in two parts: (1) background presentations from all Museum departments, and (2) a day-long seminar and
review covering different aspects of research, which was held on 15 March 1999. Six outside reviewers were Professor David Cannadine (IHR), Professor Craig Clunas (Sussex), Professor Michael Crawford (UCL), Professor Barry Cunliffe (Oxford), Dr Jan Piet Filedt Kok (Head of Research, Rijksmuseum), Dr Deborah Swallow (Chief Curator, India and South-East Asia, V&A) (BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999).

While acknowledging the Research Assessment Exercise model, the Committee was clear that the peer review methodology had to be appropriate for the Museum, including a consideration if DCMS should be invited to attend, especially in the view of the Galleries and Museum’s Commission work on *Lifting the Veil*, a report discussing research in museums, which was produced at this time by the Museums and Galleries Commission (BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999, Gunn & Prescott 1999, also see page 103).

The reports submitted to the peer review by different departments are very straightforward in their approach, stating their areas of work and priorities, while also describing difficulties and challenges in each area. In many ways, especially if we consider how carefully universities manage contents of their RAE and REF submissions, it is surprising to read how forthcoming these submissions were in assessing the Museum’s strengths and weaknesses. At the stage one session, Greek and Roman department presentation ‘lamented the gap between the study of ancient cultures in universities and museums – objects as against theories’; Prints and Drawing department highlighted ‘problem of researching 2 million items with limited resources’; Western Asiatic department noted the lack of qualified scholars especially for cuneiform collections (BM Scholarship: 23 February 1999).

At the time, there was an intention to publish the peer review report, possibly as a British Museum Occasional Paper, but it seems that this did not happened (BM Trustees: 27 March 1999). However, relying on other related records, we can find a summary of the peer review’s main recommendations as reported to the Board of Trustees -

*The reviewers were complimentary, but the following suggestions had been made:*
a) A computerised union catalogue and more systematic organisation was needed for the Departmental libraries which contained about 400,000 books. The libraries should be more accessible to the wider community.

b) The Museum should develop a system of internships with universities.

c) The public profile of research should be raised.

d) Curators needed to cultivate and encourage curiosity about other department’s collections and ideas. They should not be so tied to existing departmental structures.

e) A planned approach to research should result in this having a more clearly identified place in the Museum, making it more difficult to squeeze in difficult times.

f) Sabbaticals and period of leave were important.

g) There were innovative projects under way in the Museum, but these were not articulated to the public.

h) The post-colonial world required a rethink of the interpretation of the Museum’s ‘imperial’ collections. The cultural historical divisions of a former age should be abandoned and fresh thought given as to how the Museum could be both British and multi-cultural in post-imperial age.

(BM Trustees: 27 March 1999)

The results of the peer review feature in the Board of Trustees meeting records alongside the discussions on redundancies (BM Trustees: 27 March 1999). Lord Browne attempted to use it, without much success, to question if the cuts in departments, which appear to result in small savings, are appropriate, and if the Museum should seek to retain those specialisms that were recognised for their quality in the peer review (BM Trustees, 23 March 2002). It is obvious that the peer review process came too late and that it was not constituted in the way that would provide sufficient protection from the job cuts. The reviewers themselves recognised the need for a planned approach to research which should result in research having a more clearly identified place in the Museum (BM Trustees: 27 March 1999).
Subsequently, the Review of Museum Archaeology, chaired by Professor Cunliffe, was completed and discussed by the Scholarship Committee and the Board of Trustees in 2001 (BM Trustees: 31 March 2001). The report and recommendations of this peer review are available in full, covering management of the major archaeological work, publication of research findings, and presentation of the Museum’s archaeology. This review also discussed the issues arising because of the demise of the Study Centre, also abandoned due to the cuts. It also reflects on the Museum’s key partnerships, illicit trade in antiquities, treasure and portable antiquities. And it includes a new strategy for the Museum’s archaeology (BM Scholarship: 4 December 2001).

The formalisation processes of the British Museum research functions have led to their transformation. While always continuing to see research as the Museum’s ‘core’ function, these changes meant that research now had a more defined set of processes in many different areas. For example, the British Museum developed a clearer understanding how research proposals are prioritised and developed, how research projects are to be managed and how staff time should be managed in relation to funding availability (Interviews G2.01, G1.05 and G1.06). The British Museum’s Research Strategy from 2016 defines how the Museum measures success of its research, including its ambition to maintain a portfolio of 25 key research projects, with an annual target for 130 publications and a financial target of £6 million in additional income over 3 years (Hill & Williams 2016, unpublished). These types of measures did not exist in the late 1990s.

The success of this approach is probably best tested by the fact that during the ‘austerity’ cuts of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government starting in 2010, research at the British Museum has not experienced the same fate as in the 1990s. Even with the high level of funding cuts and the renewed pressures on staff time in this challenging funding environment (DCMS 2008 & 2017b archival), strategically and financially research has not come to the same point of crisis as in the 1990s. The Museum has maintained a strong stance on the importance of developing its research capability throughout this period, even seeing it as a financially valuable
addition to the institution in difficult times (Interview G2.01, G2.04), which shows a remarkable difference in relation to the Museum’s position in the previous financial crisis (Wilson 2002: 341-2).

Another significant change has been a much more harmonious set of messages regarding the link between the Museum’s research and its public facing activities (Interviews G2.01; G1.05). The adoption of research impact as a key policy underpinning all UK research funding has meant that this historic difficulty has now become a positive feature of research at the British Museum and a key asset within its IRO role (Interview G2.01, also see Chapter 5, page 188). We find that AHRC celebrates the IROs, including the British Museum, as ‘organisations that are inherently public-facing’ and ‘geared up for getting big audiences through their doors’ (AHRC 2017: 9). This indicates that the research funding impact policies have contributed, most likely inadvertently, to healing the rift between public and research functions.
6.8 Conclusion

This case study shows that a series of interconnected external and internal events have led to a critical juncture (Amenta 2011: 51) that changed the way in which research functions at the British Museum. Sphor (2015) argues that institutional path deviation, reversing self-reinforcing institutional process, can occur when (1) competitive pressure challenges path-dependent ideas, (2) a window of opportunity is open due to an exogenous shock weakening influence of elites leading to changes in values and beliefs, and (3) policy entrepreneurs apply techniques of path shaping and blame avoidance (Sphor 2015: 258). All these factors are evident in the British Museum’s situation at the end of 1990s, which shows high level of pressure and disruption for the whole organisation, including its research functions.

The effects of the events connected with Edwards Review (Edwards 1996 unpublished, Zan 2000 & 2006) and the Great Court crisis (Zan 2006: 71) disturbed the equilibrium of path dependence of the British Museum’s organisational processes, including those related to its research functions. The crisis forced the British Museum to strengthen and formalise its strategy, governance, and financial accountability, and to implement a series of staff changes to enable the functioning of the Great Court. This meant that there was a loss of curatorial posts and creation of new posts related to its expanded public functions (BM Trustees: 30 October 1999). The disruptive nature of this change appeared to undermine the long-held prioritisation of curatorial and research activities. However, this disruptive situation also created an opportunity to establish new ways of working that were not possible in the circumstances of slow and gradual change which was being implemented by the Scholarship Committee since its formation in 1974 (BM Scholarship archival). This case study validates our hypothesis that it was especially during the 1990s that the pressures in policy and funding environment, combined with the need to reform both research and public functions of the UK national cultural organisations, created a series of critical junctures that led to significant changes in the way in which research functions operate in the UK national cultural organisations today.
The Museum’s directors, staff, and trustees were all engaged in forming a new path for the Museum’s research. In particular, the process of formalisation of research policies at the end of the 1990s has been important for ensuring that research was repositioned to fit with the British Museum’s new management and governance frameworks, as well as to become more responsive and aligned to the fast changing and competitive university research environment. The rising levels of public funding available for research in the UK, which became available to the British Museum through its IRO status with the ARHC (Interviews G2.01; G2.04), further helped with the overall transformation of research at the British Museum. This led to a change of the Museum’s research culture from connoisseur-based scholarship towards a new research system that was driven by specific research questions and managed on project basis (Interview G1.05, G2.01).

The case study shows how the work of the Scholarship Committee between 1974 and 2001 influenced the way in which the Museum’s research operates today. The Scholarship Committee provided both a level of operational management and a strategic forum that, in conjunction with curatorial staff, set in place key definitions of the British Museum’s collection-based approach to research. This includes establishing the principle that research was to remain an integral element of curatorial roles, recognising benefits that research brings to all areas of Museum’s work, and eventually creating more harmonious links between research and public-focused activities (Interviews G2.01, G2.04). These findings validate our hypothesis that institutional governance plays significant part in the way in which research functions have developed in the UK national cultural organisations. The Great Court crisis also showed us that institutional internal choices and decision-making processes are sometimes more relevant to the future of institutional research functions than governmental factors. This includes difficult situations where poor management decisions, seemingly unrelated to research, can have negative effects on research, even if research functions are valued in an organisation.
7 The British Library and the UK research infrastructure

7.1 Introduction

The second case study explores research and science policy drivers behind the formation of the British Library, how the British Library was established as a key part of the UK national research infrastructure, and the subsequent, gradual changes in its functions. The case study explores the changes in the UK policy and government priorities relevant for the British Library, including the significant changes within science publication landscape, and the effects that this has had on the British Library. The change is further analysed by looking at how the British Library strategies have changed between 1985 and 2015.

The British Library’s organisational journey will help us explore the research questions that concern the change of relationship between governmental policies and priorities and the UK national cultural institutions over time, and especially how these changes have impacted their research functions. In this case we will follow the British Library organisational strategic
shift from its foundation to 2015. This will help us to investigate one of the hypotheses for this study – that the UK national cultural organisations have experienced a gradual move from predominantly science-led strategy and policy drivers to more dominant culture-led strategic and policy drivers. The case study exploration of the impacts of changes in scientific publishing on the British Library is related to another of our hypotheses - that the broader advances within science and research landscape influence how research functions develop and change in the UK national cultural organisations.
7.2 Creation of the national library at the centre of the UK research infrastructure

7.2.1 New organisation in a new location

The experience of looking through archival information about the British Library’s beginnings, either through governmental records, or the British Library’s own archives, or the press and other published sources, remains overwhelmingly a story about its buildings, and especially about the troubled and delayed birth of its St Pancras building (BL 1985; Kenny 1994; Sutherland 1991&1993; BBC 1998). The British Library Regular Reader’s Group, a self-appointed critical group of readers functioning at the time St Pancras building was being built, described the situation as ‘the cultural vandalism of losing the finest reading rooms in the world at Bloomsbury’, while also questioning the British Library’s intent to ‘emphasise electronic transmission of data over and above the provision of primary material for research and study’ (The British Library Regular Readers’ Group 1993). They especially criticised the Library’s Strategic Objectives for the Year 2000 (BL 1993), a document that, in the Group’s view, hardly mentions books in favour of storage and transmission of electronic documents, thus ushering ‘a complete change in the function of the National Library’ (The British Library Regular Readers’ Group 1993).

The Regular Readers’ Group was completely right in identifying this key priority for the British Library. What they seemed to disregard, or they more likely disagreed with, was that the formation of the British Library was meant to be about creating a new organisation with a new direction and function, not simply re-locating the British Museum Library to St Pancras (House of Commons 1969). The Group’s view of the new building as an enabler of the old ways of working and researching, only in a better physical environment (The British Library Regular Readers’ Group 1993) was a world away from the reasoning of Frederick Dainton’s Report of the National Libraries Committee (House of Commons 1969), the report that paved a way for the formation of the British Library. The Dainton Report grappled with a much more systemic
issue of the national libraries as a part of the national information system, envisaging the national libraries as ‘the apex of the library system, representing the best in current practice and pioneering new developments, as well as covering all subjects and giving the best possible services to users of all types’ (House Commons 1969: iv).

While the Dainton Report acknowledges the inadequacy of space both at the British Museum Library (House of Commons 1969: 72) and at other national libraries within its remit (House of Commons 1969: 140-141), its main recommendations are not about space, but about a new way to organise and administer the UK national libraries, including the main recommendation for a new statutory body - the National Libraries Authority. This body would administer the national libraries’ system, coordinate joint solutions, and achieve efficiencies in relation to, not just the on-going issues of space and storage, but also the issues such as the increase in the overall publication volumes, efficiency of inter-library loans and the growing information needs of industry. This new direction was to embrace the possibilities of ‘mechanised methods as well as applications of electronic computers’ for the national libraries (House of Commons 1969: 99). The Dainton Report (House of Commons 1969) did not dwell on the building issues, it simply assumed that the new British Museum Library building will be built in Bloomsbury and, instead, it focused on recommending what such building should be for –

We cannot emphasise too strongly our conviction that the new library building must incorporate above all else the possibility of being readily adapted for changing needs, changing services and rapid developments in library technology. (House of Commons 1969: 86)

Following the Dainton Report publication in 1969, the debate about the needs of the national libraries and in particular the British Museum Library continued, and following the general election in June 1970, in which the Conservatives under Edward Heath defeated the Labour led by Harold Wilson, the British Library came into being. David Wilson describes the moment as follows -
There was at this critical moment a change of government. Harold Wilson was replaced by Edward Heath, and Lord Eccles (who had in 1968 succeeded Lord Radcliffe as Chairman of the Trustees) was suddenly catapulted into the post of Paymaster General, which gave him responsibility for the arts. He now held ministerial responsibility for the implementation of the Dainton report. His first act was to rechristen the putative authority as the ‘British Library’. Eccles and the government accepted the main tenor of Dainton’s recommendations in a White Paper in January 1971, established the British Library as a separate entity, finally divorced from the Museum. (Wilson 2002: 276).

The new institution was to consist of the British Museum Library, including the National Reference Library of Science and Invention (NRLSI), which brought together the former Patent Office Library and the science collections of the British Museum, the National Central Library (NCL) and the National Lending Library for Science and Technology (NLLST), which was in service since 1961 at Boston Spa in Yorkshire (House of Lords 1971; Day 1995: 140). In 1974 two further institutions became part of the British Library - the British National Bibliography (BNB) and the Office of Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI). Lord Eccles became the British Library’s first Chair, and Harry Hookway, who was Head of the Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) (Day 1995: 140) and a former scientific attaché to the British Embassy in Washington (The Times: 24 September 2014), was appointed as its first Chief Executive.

7.2.2 The British Museum Library’s quest for space

To understand the British Library’s intended role, it is important to examine two different requirements that underpin its formation – (1) the British Museum’s quest for space, and (2) the government’s policy-led quest for a national library that will respond to scientific, industrial, and technological information challenges of its time (House of Lords 1967; House of Commons 1969).
The first narrative, about the British Museum’s quest for space, goes back to the very origins of the British Museum Library and its chronic shortage of space throughout its history – from the ‘exceedingly damp basement’ and the ‘most unhealthy rooms’ of Montagu House to the Parliamentary Inquiries on the British Museum in 1835 and 1836 (House of Commons 1835; Edwards 1839) with many serious complaints about the space shortages especially in relation to the natural history collections (Miller 1973: 141). Even after the opening of the new reading rooms in the north wing in 1838, the Library space remained constrained and it was immediately judged too small, with readers strongly disliking ‘the torrid atmosphere’, giving rise to the notorious ‘Museum headache’ (Miller 1973: 156). The Library’s situation improved with the realisation of Panizzi’s plan for the Round Reading Room (Edwards 1870: 585), which would become the most recognisable and loved feature of the British Museum Library. The project was realised in 1857, but this also did not resolve the problem of space for long (Wilson 2002: 130). The difficult conditions at the British Museum resulted in another Select Committee Enquiry
in 1860 and, eventually, to the move of natural history collections to the new building in South Kensington, which opened its doors in April 1881 (Stearn 1981:55). But even after this, the expansion of the Library could not be accommodated for long. At the beginning of the 20th century the situation was so bad that the bill was put to the Parliament to stop the Library collecting newspapers and instead entrust regional newspaper collection to local councils, which was avoided only thanks to some last-minute campaigning leading to the opening of the Colindale Newspaper Library in 1905 (Wilson 2002: 203).

In the first half of the 20th century, two World Wars took their toll on the Museum’s buildings with some 150,000 books destroyed by fire caused by incendiary bombs in May 1941 (Wilson 2002: 250). Furthermore, Wilson tells us that the post-war austerity meant that the true reconstruction of the British Museum did not start till the late 1960s and 70s (2002: 252-3) – exactly the time when the subject of the national libraries is being discussed by different government bodies. Harris tells us about the space strain on all Library departments in the post-war period, especially Department of Printed Books, which resulted in the moves of some of the collections to the former Woolwich arsenal (Harris 1998: 619).

The complexity of infrastructure and collections that the British Museum Library brought into the Dainton Review in 1969 was considerable, centred around its four key Library departments of Printed Books, Manuscripts, Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, and Prints and Drawings. The collections of the British Museum Library extended to around 120 miles of shelving, with additional 250 miles of microfilm occupying half a mile of shelving. The Library was issuing 1.6 million items to readers in 1967 (House of Commons 1969: 9-16). In addition, in 1960 the British Museum was entrusted a responsibility for the National Reference Library of Science and Invention (NRLSI), which incorporated the Patent Office Library originally opened in 1855 and which had a statutory obligation to provide public access to copies of all patents granted, and eventually grew into a general scientific collection with the premises in Holborn and Bayswater. The NRLSI was charged with providing ‘all literature of current value in every language
embracing the whole of the natural sciences and their associated technologies, with special coverage in the field of invention’ (Day 1988: 111-2, House of Commons 1969: 19-20). In words of Lord Eccles, who was at the time the trustee of the British Museum, during the debate in the House of Lords about the British Museum Library on 13 December 1967 -

*Lack of funds has crippled the development of the Museum, and especially of the Library. I am not saying that we have had no increases in our budget. Of course, we are grateful for small mercies. From time to time there have been additions to meet rising costs, or even to try to bring the staff somewhat nearer their authorised complement. But funds for building work have been far short of what is needed. Even in 1967, although the collections were bound to grow every year, some of the severe war damage has not yet been made good. The restaurant is a disgrace to London, and in gallery space we are not yet back to where we were thirty years ago.*

*(House of Lords 1967: 1115)*

### 7.2.3 Dainton and Perry Reports: national library and information services as a vital research infrastructure

The Dainton Committee understood the system of national libraries to be significantly broader than the British Museum Library alone, even with the inclusion of the NRLSI. The libraries under its remit also included the National Central Library (NCL), the National Lending Library for Science and Technology (NLLST), and the British National Bibliography (BNB), as well as bibliographic activities and translations carried out by the Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) and by the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux (Aslib). The principal recommendation of the Dainton Report was to establish the National Libraries Authority, a new statutory public body, which would coordinate the administration of the British Museum Library (including NRLSI), the National Central Library, the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, and the British National Bibliography.
The Report recommended a unified governance and public funding from a single source for these national libraries. It also recommended that the new Authority should coordinate the government’s library policies and take steps to enable better lending and photocopying services, automated data processing, bibliographic services, research and training (House of Commons 1969: xii-xv). This concept of a national library was much broader than the assumption made by many that the British Museum Library constitutes a national library in its own right, in all but in name (UGC 1967; House of Lords 1967). Equally, the issues arising for the national libraries were seen as wider ranging than the issues of space and storage, encompassing the issues of changing publication landscape, the needs of more efficient information supply for science and industry, as well as the need to enable deployment of new technologies (House of Commons 1969).

The Dainton Report followed closely after the publication of another contemporary report about libraries, the Report of the Committee on Libraries commissioned by the University Grants Committee (UGC 1967), and known as the Parry Report after its chairman, Dr Thomas Parry, formerly Librarian of the National Library of Wales and at the time the Principal of University College of Wales in Aberystwyth. This report dealt with the issue of development of
academic libraries, but it also included a section about the British Museum Library, which this report recognises as the national library in its own right. While Parry’s Report recognises a range of library institutions fulfilling different national roles, it concludes –

*We consider that the British Museum should become the National Library and that as many of the above functions as possible should be carried out by that institution as a matter of urgency. The finance necessary to carry out these services, which we judge to be of prime importance for the proper development of library and information services for universities and for the country as a whole, should be made available to the British Museum as soon as possible. Since the Trustees and the Director of the British Museum have dual responsibility for both a Museum and a Library it is the opinion of the Committee that the range of functions suggested as proper to a national library could be fully carried out by the British Museum only when the new library building is completed and the library departments reconstituted and housed as a unit. (UGC 1967: 88)*

7.2.4 Realpolitik: making of the national library

Harris informs us that the British Museum started to plan a new library building in earnest in 1959, not long after Frank Francis became Director and Principal Librarian (Harris 1998: 673). In 1962, the Minister of Works approved the appointment of the architects Colin St John Wilson and Sir Leslie Martin (Harris 1998: 675) and the work progressed to the point that by 1967 the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works has completed the compulsory purchase of 60% of the Museum’s preferred site in Great Russell Street (Harris 1998: 676). The Parry Report (UGC 1967) recommendations added pressure to continue with this work, embracing the intended British Museum changes and plans within its vision of the future UK library system.

It is not surprising that, when the government rejected the British Museum’s plans for a new library in Great Russell Street in 1967 and formed a brand-new Committee led by Frederick Dainton, this turn of events was not
welcome by the British Museum. The change of plans led to vigorous protests from the trustees and other influential Museum supporters (House of Commons 1967: 1904, Harris 1998: 677). The matter was briefly debated in the House of Commons in October 1967 (House of Commons 1967: 1904-5), but the more substantive debate was held in the House of Lords in December 1967 (House of Lords 1967: 1114-240), where we find Viscount Radcliffe, Chair of Trustees of the British Museum at the time, also known for the so-called Radcliffe Line and his role in the partition of India in 1947, put forward the Museum’s position as follows -

*Four years have been spent by the Parry Committee - four years, on their investigation of part of this problem. But I do not suppose the Parry Committee are very popular, because they assume that the British Museum would be treated as a National Library and would have a large extension. I dare say that that was not regarded as something which they ought to be talking about. I think this alleged desire to have a committee to tell you what you ought to know or find out yourself is another of these ideas that have been cooked up. I am very sorry to have to talk like this; it is really in a sense disgraceful that I should have to. But this is forced upon us; yes, forced upon us, I quite agree, by the Government’s action; not ours.*

*(House of Lords 1967: 1138)*

The Lords’ debate was dominated by the past and present trustees of the British Museum in the House of Lords – Lord Eccles, Viscount Radcliffe, Earl Jellicoe, Lord Annan, Archbishop of Canterbury etc. They were concerned that the newly commissioned review would damage the interests of the British Museum and lead to a collapse of the Museum’s plan for a new library building in Bloomsbury (House of Lords 1967). As well as defending the planning and the effects that the new building will have on Bloomsbury, Lord Eccles and Viscount Radcliffe, in particular, were critical of the lack of the government consultation with the British Museum in commissioning the new report and the rejection of the British Museum’s existing plans (House of Lords 1967: 1240).
A compromise solution was found after the change of government in 1970, with the Dainton Report being eventually welcomed by the British Museum, especially as the new report also supported the Museum’s plan for a new building in Bloomsbury. This outcome was considered a great success for the Museum by Lord Eccles, especially as the Great Russell Street plan has been revived (Harris 1998: 682). Following the election, Lord Eccles became, first, the Paymaster General and then, the Minister for the Arts. He was therefore in position to accept the Dainton Report’s recommendation on behalf of the new government, but also made a decisive change to Dainton’s recommendation for the National Library Authority by deciding to put in place a single new organisation - The British Library – thus uniting all the disparate organisations into one new organisation. Lord Eccles also approved the initial investment for the Bloomsbury building plans to proceed (Wilson 2002: 276).

In his address at the House of Lords in 1971, Lord Eccles celebrates
the outcome and looks forward to a new organisation with its expanding functions -

... the British Library will not be only a fount of scholarship, a large post-graduate university, but a business concern handling millions of transactions a year and, one hopes, also a highly diplomatic coordinator of the whole library system of the United Kingdom. (House of Lords 1971: 1282)

Sir Anthony Kenny, another Chair of the British Library (1993-96), tells us in his pamphlet, written to defend the British Library’s building progress, that in 1973 Colin St John Wilson produced a second plan for a new building adjacent to the British Museum, and that –

‘Until 1975, it was still hoped that the new building would be in Bloomsbury, but in 1976, in response to local opposition to a new building being constructed in Bloomsbury, the Government paid £6 million for a goods yard alongside St Pancras station to provide an alternative site.’ (Kenny 1994: 7)

This new situation was greeted with regret and as a matter of necessity rather than choice by the British Library Board at the time (Kenny 1994: 7-9). However, we also find that St Pancras was mentioned as an option for the new national library much earlier by Lord Fiske, who was previously the Chairman of the London County Council’s Town Planning Committee, when he discusses different options for the Library in his maiden speech during the already mentioned Lords’ debate of 1967 -

The second big change is the vast reorganisation proposals affecting St. Pancras and King’s Cross stations. My Lords, do not let us just think of these as a series of platforms with ticket offices at the end. These proposals will release, on reorganisation, a vast acreage of land for redevelopment, and redevelopment which will carry no re-housing commitment with it at all. I think it would be foolish for any Government to forge ahead on a proposal which has not materialised in twenty years without giving some thought to the changed planning
proposals that can now be considered by us today.

(House of Lords 1967: 1152-3)

And how surprised, or maybe not, Lord Fiske would be to find the vast new developments around St Pancras and King’s Cross today, encompassing the new Knowledge Quarter, describing itself as ‘the greatest knowledge cluster anywhere in the world’ (Knowledge Quarter n.d.). In his introduction to the British Library strategy Living Knowledge (BL 2015), Roly Keating, the current British Library CEO, describes the subsequent development of the area as follows –

…a location that was questioned by early commentators but which is now quite literally at the centre of the greatest and fastest-growing concentration of research, cultural and information organisations anywhere in Europe. (BL 2015: 5)
7.3 Different visions for the new national library

The British Museum’s vision for its Library was not only about the space, and the debate feeding into the Dainton Report (House of Commons 1969) provides an insight into the British Museum’s view of the type of research infrastructure the British Museum Library wanted to be. Its key characteristics include its interdisciplinary nature, as well as providing the link between the Library and the Museum collections. This link was seen as its unique asset, distinguishing it from its peer institutions worldwide, and forming a key argument as to why the Library and the Museum collections should not be split, as explained by Lord Eccles (1967) in his role as a trustee of the British Museum -

My Lords, I must say just a word or two about the reason for keeping the Library and the collections together. From the evidence I have seen it appears that all advanced countries—and I mean "all"—either have now, or are at this moment busily creating, a national library of the kind that we already possess and want to keep in Bloomsbury. But no other country has been able to site its national library alongside collections of antiquities or works of art. That does not mean that they would not have liked to do so if they could. We know they are very envious of the sequence of events which enabled us in Britain to build our National Library and collections together. We know this because the messages of support that we have received from some of the greatest libraries overseas all fasten on to the advantage which Great Britain enjoys in the combination of library and collections. Our foreign friends are jealous of us and do not want to see us throw our good fortune away. (House of Lords 1967: 1120-1)

We have already seen in the British Museum case study that the loss of government receipt for the British Library hurt the British Museum financially (Chapter 6, page 235). The slow departure of the British Library held back the Museum’s own building development plans for longer than two decades. In addition, many other matters had to be resolved during the prolonged separation time. For example, the King’s Library, which was such a significant
part of the British Museum’s history and a part of its building fabric, became a subject of a protracted negotiation, with the Museum hoping to keep it (BM Trustees: 23 February 1985).

Image 19 - King's Library tower at the British Library, housing King George III library. Author's own photo.

It was only in 1985, that Sir Denis Hamilton, acting as the British Museum Trustees’ representative on the newly formed British Library Board, informs the British Museum Trustees that ‘The Queen has consented to the removal of the books and a room to house them had been designed in the new Library building (BM Trustees: 23 February 1985).

Considering the potency of the narrative of the Library as an integral part the British Museum, it is important to understand the second, policy-driven national library narrative, which is centred around the changing information landscape and the raise of new technologies. These concerns underpin the Dainton Report and thus lead to a change in the British Museum’s original plans and the very definition of the UK national library. Going back to the Lords’ debate in 1967, Baroness Phillips, speaking for the government, sums the situation of the UK national libraries and the aims of the Dainton Report -

There is, first and foremost, the British Museum Library, much the largest and the most famous of the four and now comprising two
distinct parts, the main collection and the scientific books. These last, together with the former Patent Office library form the new National Reference Library of Science and Invention, but although this Library has a separate name, and the books are physically separated from the other books, institutionally it is an integral part of the large British Museum Library. The other three libraries covered by the terms of reference, are the National Central Library, the Science Museum Library, both in London, and the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, in Yorkshire. My hope, my Lords, is that this debate will throw valuable light on the problems the Government face in achieving an organisation for these great Libraries which will ensure the best and most efficient and the most economic service for all who use them. There is an urgent need for new thinking in all this. The previous plans for the British Museum Library were made without any thinking at all on this central question. We must now think in terms of future needs and do so in relation to modern techniques. We must have, as a principal aim, the need to avoid overlapping.

(House of Lords 1968: 1124)

Baroness Phillips’ statement above is grounded in the prevailing library and information policies of the time, which tended to link the library provision with the post-war industrial revival and the need for efficient scientific information infrastructure. Donald Urquhart, the founder of the NLLST at Boston Spa, explains it in the following way -

*In the early post-war years it was decided in the United Kingdom that any short-term increase in industrial productivity was more likely to result from the utilization of existing information than the discovery of new information. This led to different attempts to review technical information services to see how they could be improved.*

(Urquhart 1954: 123)

The idea that the improved access to scientific literature will improve British science and that such improvement could be linked to a post-war industrial revival was systematically explored during the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference held in 1948. Urquhart judges this
Conference to be a pivotal moment which led to the government’s realisation that the national library and information arrangements in the UK require major improvement (Urquhart 1990: 27). The focus of the emerging government policies is not so much the accumulation of all scientific literature for reference in one building, as per the British Museum Library model, but it is focused on more efficient organisation of rapidly growing scientific literature through indexing, abstracting and improvements in bibliographic record. Its central aim is to improve access to information for scientists and industry through photocopying services, efficient inter-library loans and remote lending (Urquhart 1954&1990; Day 1988: Bar 1983). As the new technologies developed, the policy started to be concerned with the adoption of automation to provide better and more efficient scientific information systems as we have already seen in the Dainton Report (House of Commons 1969; DES 1972; Black et. al. 2007).

By the time the formation of the British Library takes place, the UK government had already initiated a range of initiatives in line with these concerns and policy developments, including the formation of the NLLST in 1956 - ‘a new national library designed to provide a postal loans service for scientific and technical literature within the United Kingdom’ (Day 1988: 101). Also, we find that Department of Education and Science (DES) at this time comprised Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI), which was focused on improving information for natural and social sciences to advance effectiveness of scientific communication and utilise new opportunities offered by automation (Day 1988: 125). The goal was for the modern scientific information record to transform the UK science and technology. It was this type of policy that underpinned the formation of the British Library as expressed in the British Library Act in 1972, thus bringing together sciences, technology, and humanities. The British Library Act states that the British Library will become ‘a national centre for reference, study and bibliographical and other information services, in relation both to scientific and technological matters and to the humanities’ (Acts of Parliament 1972). This meant becoming much more than just a replication of the British Museum Library in a new building.
7.4 UK university, science, technology, and industrial policy context relevant for the British Library

7.4.1 Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR): scientific literature and post-war recovery

The beginnings of the formal science policy in the United Kingdom are often traced back to the creation of Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, which was formed in 1915 under the auspices of the Board of Education, with a task to develop scientific study of problems affecting industry (Flanagan et. al. 2019: 58). This governmental body was created as a result of the First World War scientific mobilisation, at the same time as the Ministry of Munitions and the government-backed British Dyestuffs, all part of Britain’s war effort (Gascoigne 2019: 151). The formation of the British Library in the second part of the 20th century was underpinned by similar principles – it was enabled through a direct state intervention, which arose from the scientific priorities of this era to embrace more modern and efficient methods of organising ever growing number of scientific publications in an effort to enable the post-war industrial development. This is reflected in the Dainton Report on the national libraries in 1969 and in the British Library Act of 1972 (House of Commons 1969; British Library Act 1972).

To explore the origins of the scientific policy drivers that led to the formation of the British Library, we need to go further back in time than the 1970s, to the post World War II activities of Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), the first government department in the UK tasked ‘to promote organised research and funding from Whitehall’, and which operated between 1916 and 1965 (Flanagan et. al. 2019: 58). DSIR’s task was to realise the expected advantage that the state sought to achieve from scientific advances in two World Wars and the subsequent Cold War, but it also evolved for itself a more encompassing peace-time role ‘as a body that organised science for the benefit of the country’ with an aim ‘of bringing science and industry in Britain into a closer relationship’ (Clarke 2019: 15). This fundamentally changed the previous, less formal relationship between
science and state in Britain marking a watershed moment for relations between science and the British state’ –

*Where once the emphasis had been on science’s independence, the needs of war and the increasing scale of scientific research had resulted in an institution that was an integral part of the governmental apparatus. Government and the scientific community were now working in close partnership.* (Gascoigne 2019: 152)

Hull (1999) tells us that –

*In this sense the establishment of the DSIR retains an iconic importance as the moment when the state was convinced by scientists that a comprehensive national science policy was crucial to national power.* (Hull 1999: 463)

While DSIR is known as a government department that gave us the National Physics Laboratory, the Geological Survey, and the Medical Research Council, it is less known that DSIR also enabled the creation of the British Museum’s Conservation Laboratory in 1919 (Wilson 2002: 213). More significantly for the British Library, DSIR’s Intelligence Division after the World War II included a technical information section, which was concerned with the improvement of flow of scientific information to science and industry (Urquhart 1990: 20-21), which eventually led to the formation of the DSIR Lending Library that became the National Lending Library for Science and Technology (NLLST) in Boston Spa. The NLLST was officially opened by Lord Hailsham, Minister of Science, on 5 November 1962 and later become a key constituent part of the British Library (Day 1988: 101-102; 1994: 181).

The concern with the timely supply of scientific literature, in particular to the industry, exercised DSIR throughout the post war period. Donald Urquhart, who will become a founding Director of the NLLST, notes as particularly significant the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference held in 1948, where he contributed a paper as a DSIR officer, focusing on the need for a better lending library (Urquhart 1954:123 & 1990:33). The Conference explored potential for improvements in existing methods of collection, indexing, and distribution of scientific literature (McNinch 1949: 136) and its
recommendations resulted in DSIR setting up the Panel on Technical Information Services of the Committee on Industrial Productivity, in line with the Conference recommendation to allocate ‘certain residual and co-ordinating functions to Department of Scientific and Industrial Research Headquarters Technical Information Service’ (Urquhart 1954: 123), thus further embedding these functions within DSIR rather than entrusting these developments to scientists or librarians.

Other DSIR activities related to scientific information included running a Technical Information and Document Unit, which was a government unit investigating and reporting on foreign industrial activity (Urquhart 1990: 45-46), as well as a programme of translation of Russian scientific literature (Urquhart 1990: 39). These activities very clearly fall under the definition of science in the service of advancing the power of the state, in this case the British state during the Cold War.

7.4.2 National Lending Library for Science and Technology (NLLST)

DSIR’s concern for improving the availability of scientific information for industry led to it to accept the responsibility for forming the new national lending library in 1956 – ‘because it was accepted that an increased use of the available scientific information could help to increase productivity’ (Urquhart 1990: 44). Donald Urquhart was put in charge of this task, eventually taking over a set of decommissioned munition factories at Thorp Arch in Boston Spa as a site for this new library (de Figuiredo unpublished 2018: 3; Urquhart 1990). While it seems like a radical change to move from munitions to a library, repurposing of the site shows how one necessity of the state has been replaced by another, with a military function being replaced by a scientific one.

Urquhart’s unorthodox approach to developing the NLLST resulted in a formation of a unique institution - ‘a library run by scientists and not by librarians along traditional lines’. This led to radical re-defining of traditional definitions of catalogues, shelving methods, abstracts, and bibliographies, resulting in an innovative library concept focused on serving scientist and
industry by remote lending via postal service (Day 1988: 101). These services eventually became a part of the British Library, and the successor services continue to exist to this day, such as the British Library’s On Demand service (BL 2015: 17).

The new library survived much longer than the initial policy context that led to its formation, outliving DSIR itself, which was disbanded in 1965, when the NLLST became a part of the newly formed Department of Education and Science, which continued to provide its core funding with the contribution from other government departments (House of Commons 1969: 25). The NLLST continued to develop in this new context till the time of the Dainton Report and the British Library formation, by which time the use of the lending service grew from 118,000 document requests in 1962 to 716,000 in 1968 (House of Commons 1969: 26). Urquhart retired in 1974, seeing the NLLST become part of the new British Library.
7.4.3 Uniting and expanding science collections and services at the British Library

The formation of the British Library provided a way to unify London and Boston Spa approaches to science. The NLLS was eventually combined with the National Central Library, another national facility with a strong tradition of interlibrary lending, to form the British Library’s Lending Division, renamed the Document Supply Centre in 1985 (Brindley 2005: 78), and known as the Library’s On Demand service today (BL 2015: 17). Science collections also included the reference collections of the British Museum Library and the NRLSI. The reference functions of the NRLSI became known as the Science Reference Library within the new British Library, subsequently becoming the Science Reference and Information Service (SRIS) in the 1985 reorganisation (Day 1988: 112).

The urgency of providing services to industry was expressed by Lord Eccles in the House of Lords in 1971 -

*The urgency of the needs of the patent community and of industry at large are very much in our minds and they will be recognised by building the Science Reference Library first and, it is hoped, opening its doors by 1978. Similarly, the national collections of books for lending between libraries, now roughly divided between the National Central Library, which is concerned with the humanities, and the National Lending Library for Science and Technology which is concerned with the sciences, will be united at Boston Spa.*

*(House of Lords 1971: 1140)*

Eventually, the new building at St Pancras was to include a dedicated Science Reading Room. During the reorganisation in 1985 two principal divisions were formed – Humanities and Social Sciences, and Science, Technology and Industry. Russon (1995: 69) tells us that these divisions operated on an equal footing in accordance with Library’s fundamental remit based on its founding Act.

The strong link between the British Library and the government science
bodies continued after its initial formation, including the addition of the Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI), which was transferred to the British Library from DES, having previously moved from DSIR after the department was dissolved in 1965 (Day 1988: 125). As well as attempting to solve the issue of ever-growing scientific information and publishing, the OSTI ‘recognized early on that computer-based handling of information was going to be a vital area for research, and, by the 1970s, had extended this to include networking’ (Meadows 2008: 409). After being absorbed into the British Library, OSTI changed its name to the British Library Research and Development Department (Day 1988: 125-6). The new department continued to support research in information science till its eventual transfer from the British Library to the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in 1996 (Law 1999: 127), where it was to lose its scientific roots and then disappear with the disestablishment of the MLA in 2012 (MLA 2012).

7.4.4 Document Supply

Science, Technology and Industry Division of the British Library, led by Maurice Line as Director General from 1985 to 1988, was in large part developed on commercial principles, underpinned by the growth of Document Supply services, which was, as described by Line, based on the government policy to reduce public spending ‘not necessarily from perceived economic necessity but on the basic principle that the public sector should be reduced and the private sector encouraged’ (Maurice & Scott 1995: 57). The British Library was an example of success in this respect, earning ‘over 25% of what it spends’ (Maurice & Scott 1995: 59). While a partial or full marketisation in public sector is better known as one of the key features of British public policy during Thatcher years, in the case of the British Library, the organisation was conceived from the very beginning as having commercial functions, this being one of the solutions for dealing with a continuous expansion of scientific literature and its associated costs. The Dainton Report recommended from the very start in 1969 that the National Library’s Authority, later changed into the British Library, ‘should be allowed to apply the profits from its activities and
savings from its administration to the further development of its services’ (House of Commons 1969: xiii). Later, we will find this principle underlined by Lord Eccles, who hoped that the new British Library will be, among other things, ‘a business concern handling millions of transactions a year’ (House of Lords 1971: 1282).

During the 1990s, it appeared that this commercial ambition was achieved. Brindley (2005: 78) tells us that at its peak in 1998/1999, ‘the British Library’s Document Supply service was fulfilling over four million requests for individual documents annually – three million to UK customers and one million overseas’. While there is no doubt about a substantial demand and income at the time, it is more debatable if the Document Supply was profitable even at its peak. This is difficult to validate due to the way in which the British Library accounts augmented the organisation’s trading income (BL 2001: 31). The documentation released for the Strategic Review consultation in 1998, says that in 1997/98, the Document Supply total income was £24.2m, but the total expenditure was £26.6m, implying that the service was subsidised for the remaining £2.4m from public funds (BL 1998: 6). This does not mean that the service did not generate a significant value for its users and the Library.

Unfortunately, the rise in demand for remote document supply of the 1990s was followed by a downturn as the Library entered the 2000s. Lynne Brindley, Chief Executive of the British Library from 2000 to 2012, explained the Document Supply decline as a result of change in user behaviour as digital information becomes available on the internet, affording more immediate and direct access to information aided by new technology such as Google, as well as the appearance of ‘big deals’ between libraries and journal publishers (Brindley 2005: 78-79) –

For a small additional price, these offer libraries an extended package of online journals, including many lower-use titles to which libraries would not traditionally have subscribed. These same marginal titles would, in the past, have been satisfied by document delivery. The result is that there has been a rapid downturn in demand for document delivery which can be traced back to the times of the early big deals, in 1998-1999 in particular. (Brindley 2005: 78)
Figure 11 shows the rise and fall in the demand for Document Supply and its predecessor services between 1973 and 2011 –

![Document Supply 1973 – 2011](Image)

Figure 11 - Rise and fall in demand for the British Library's Document Supply services 1973-2011. ©The British Library Board (Brazier 2011)

7.4.5 British Library and the UK higher education libraries

The British Library's central role in enabling supply of scientific documents, and its unique provision for humanities, meant that the Library developed strong links with the academic library community, as well as being significant for the UK higher education policy regarding research information. We have already seen how the importance of the efficient national library as an integrating force was described in the Perry Report (UGC 1967), in the context of academic libraries policy aimed to underpin the growth of the UK higher education sector and the rise in student numbers. In this context the British Library was seen as having an important role in controlling the cost of publication provision, and as having a potential to increase efficiency of information provision of library services in higher education (UGC 1967). The
most significant period of redefining the British Library’s relationship with academic libraries took place during the 1990s and is connected to the Follett Review, which was commissioned by HEFCE and its equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to deal with underfunding in academic libraries.

The Follett Review was completed in 1993 and subsequently credited with enabling a transformation of academic libraries in the years to follow. Amongst many areas that this review tackled was the use of inter-library lending by academic libraries, including the British Library’s Document Supply Centre, which this review regarded as an integral part of higher education system (Follett 1993: paragraph 202). The Review also addressed the future needs and recommended development of the new methods of electronic document delivery, utilising Jisc and SuperJANET network. The recommendations of the Follett Review also pave the way to funding development of new technical tools and innovation to enable these developments (Follett 1993: paragraph 277). According to Law -

*The Follett Report had led to an infusion of cash into the HE library sector which was bursting with ideas for innovation and the use of new technology, for the provision of national services and great enthusiasm for a period of rapid change.* (Law 2005: 86)

The Follett Committee’s Information Technology Sub-Group (FIGIT) and the subsequent e-LIB Electronic Libraries programme funded by Jisc were chaired by Lynne Brindley, who in 2000 became the Chief Executive of the British Library (Anderson & Follett 2012: 37). Under Brindley’s leadership the British Library sought to improve and expand its relationships with higher education through the initiatives such as Research Libraries Network, launched in 2004, later renamed into Research Information Network, which was an organisation aiming to coordinate the collaborative provision of research information (Stephens 2012: 83). The strength and significance of relationships with higher education is evident during the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee review of the library services for higher education in 2002, where the British Library provides evidence, with the Library’s Chair at the time, Lord Eatwell, and Lynne Brindley, as Chief
Executive, appearing alongside Sir Howard Newby, Chief Executive of HEFCE, and Sir Brian Follett, Chairman of the Research Support Libraries Group (RSLG) (House of Commons 2002: paragraph 1). The new direction is evident as Lord Eatwell describes how the British Library has a central role in providing excellent research provision for the UK universities (House of Commons 2002: paragraph 5), followed by a discussion about the collaboration that would enable the future, collaborative work on the national electronic library (House of Commons 2002: paragraph 12). Higher education becomes the highest priority for the British Library at this time. However, there is more than a hint that the British Library saw its alignment with the government departments at this time as problematic in relationship to its vision and intended activities -

"Lord Eatwell told us that "well over half of all the Library's activities are devoted to the support of higher education research". Mrs Brindley commented that the DfES was not consulted regarding the work of the British Library or the RSLG, as the sponsoring department of the British Library was the Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS]. Lord Eatwell told us that the British Library was a "big chunk" of the DCMS's budget. (House of Commons 2002: paragraph 26)"

This new higher education focus also led to a range of new, collaborative initiatives with higher education. In 2008 HEFCE announced £9.84m for a five-year programme to develop the UK Research Reserve (UKRR), a collaborative programme to de-duplicate low use journals and free space in academic libraries (Stephens 2012: 84). This is another programme that continues today. Jisc became a major funder of the British Library’s projects, including the initial digitisation of newspapers, the establishment of the UK Web Archive and EThOS, a new service enabling digitisation and access to digitised UK PhD theses (BL 2004, 2008). The relationship with Jisc remained strong until HEFCE’s review of Jisc in 2010, which changed its business and funding model which made the joint projects and funding of this nature more difficult (HEFCE 2010).
7.4.6 Open Access

While discussing the British Library developments, Brindley (2005:79) points to the future trends such as Open Access movement, which has since developed into a new business model for scholarly publishing and changed the shape of scholarly communications. Berlin Declaration from 2003 regarding Open Access to knowledge in sciences and humanities states that ‘the Internet has fundamentally changed the practical and economic realities of distributing scientific knowledge and cultural heritage’ (Max Planck Gesellschaft 2003). Open access to ‘original scientific research results, raw data and metadata, source materials, digital representations of pictorial and graphical materials and scholarly multimedia material’ would enable -

…a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution…
(Max Planck Gesellschaft 2003)

At first a bottom-up, community movement, bound with the increasing use of the Internet, Open Access eventually became a policy driven exercise, involving science funders and policy makers across the world, who started mandating Open Access publication methods for science funded from public purse, such as we see in the REF 2021 Open Access policy by Research England -

The four UK HE funding bodies believe that the outputs of publicly funded research should be freely accessible and widely available. Open access research brings benefits to researchers, students, institutions, governments, public bodies, professionals and practitioners, citizen scientists and many others. Open access has the potential to make research more efficient and impactful. In view of these benefits, and to embed open access as an intrinsic part of the research process, the funding bodies have introduced a policy
requirement on open access in REF 2021.
(Research England 2019: 3)

The policy rationale for Open Access for the REF submissions refers to the increased efficiency and impact of science and, in this respect, is very similar to the DSIR’s policies from the mid 20th century (Urquhart 1954). The similarity of aim to improve efficiency of information for science and industry is evident in the contemporary science policy such as in this extract published by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2011 -

The Government, in line with our overarching commitment to transparency and open data, is committed to ensuring that publicly-funded research should be accessible free of charge. Free and open access to taxpayer-funded research offers significant social and economic benefits by spreading knowledge, raising the prestige of UK research and encouraging technology transfer. At the moment, such research is often difficult to find and expensive to access. This can defeat the original purpose of taxpayer-funded academic research and limits understanding and innovation. (BIS 2011: 76)

Open Access policies of today are effectively a new mechanism for tackling the same issue of improving access to scientific information that remote lending was attempting to solve fifty years ago. It is just adjusted for more advanced technology of our time. The new Open Access publishing models and policies at first appeared to challenge the profit-driven models of large publishers (Brindley 2005: 79). However, what was a community led movement has since become a new business model dominated by large scientific publishers and leading to significant increases in their profits (Markin 2021). However, this commercial upturn did not apply to the Library’s Document Supply service that continued to decline (Brazier 2011; BL 2015).

Considering its foundational role in enabling national and international supply of scientific information, it is surprising to find that the British Library barely features in the UK Open Access policies. For example, in the Finch Report, an independent report provided by a committee chaired by Dame Janet Finch in 2012, and which paved the way for the subsequent UK policies,
the British Library appears only in the context of public libraries and public access to science (Finch 2012: 10, 81), not as a part of the national information and research infrastructure. In this report the Document Supply service is remembered only as a historic route to research content, from ‘a decade ago’, still operating but perceived to be in irreversible decline (Finch 2012: 40).

In its ambition for Open Access, Finch Report evokes the words and the ambition of Anthony Panizzi for the British Museum Library that -

…a poor student [should] have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity, of following his rational pursuits, of consulting the same authorities, of fathoming the most intricate inquiry, as the richest man in the Kingdom, as far as books go, and I contend that the Government is bound to give him the most liberal and unlimited assistance in this respect. (Finch 2012: 47, Edwards 1870: 413)

This is an especially ironic moment because the Finch Report does not see a meaningful position for the British Library to contribute towards applying Panizzi’s vision to the 21st century. Once at the centre of scholarly publishing, it appears that the British Library is to sit at the margins of the most important scholarly publication policies of the 21st century. At best, the British Library is mentioned briefly in Open Access policies in relation to its preservation functions. However, even this role is seen as something that should be shared, or sometimes taken over, by Jisc or commercial preservation providers (Tickell 2018: 64, 66; Finch 2012: 10, 123). This represents a radical change from the time when an equivalent policy driver - to enable better use of technologies to improve access to science in the mid 20th century – led to the formation of the British Library.

There are several reasons that could explain this change – first, the ongoing commercialisation and globalisation of science and universities became inextricably linked with the rapid growth of private sector scientific publishing, including a commercial Open Access, which is dominated by small number of large science publishers (McCaig 2018; Markin 2021). Hammarfelt & Hallonsten (2023) point out that the new notions of research value, expressed through bibliometric evaluation could be described as a part of ‘neoliberal’
ideology as they became a way for national states to steer its research systems. In this scenario, scientific publications became a type of currency between the state, universities and publication policies and infrastructures. The British Library, within this DCMS policy context, rather than, for example, its historic DSIR context, did not belong to this new scientific policy, funding and value ecosystem. Second, the British Library did not modernise its Document Supply business model in time to respond to these changes, and it did not sufficiently invest in its digital infrastructure (Law 2005). Over time many have been critical of the British Library’s effort to develop its systems in line with the fast technological change. Some refer to the wasted years caused by the Library’s preoccupation with the St Pancras building (Day 1998: 8-45; Law 1999: 127-8). The critical voices were especially strong amongst academic librarians. Law described the British Library as -

... sclerotic, with a poor track record on IT innovation, stultified by financial problems and with an introverted if understandable concern with little beyond the new St Pancras building. In terms of document supply it was seen as a near monopoly supplier with no clear intention to move towards electronic document delivery, a goal prized by the HE community. (Law 2005: 86).

Law also identified the British Library’s internal issues, and in particular the continued existence of two cultures within the organisation –

Throughout this period it appeared from outside at least that two cultures operated within the library and that the scientific information/commercial tradition of Boston Spa and SRIS and the scholarly humanities non-commercial tradition of London failed to integrate except in the most superficial ways (Law 1999: 127).

But primarily, it is important to keep in mind a very political nature of Open Access policies, which as well as providing access, create an underpinning of public justification of the government science spending in the way that did not exist in the mid-20th century. The new metrics and quality assessment systems transformed scientific publications to serve not just as a source of scientific knowledge, but also as a measurement of national scientific
productivity and international prestige, and a significant factor in allocating institutional and research funding (Research England 2019). The UK Open Access policies are managed within the extensive system of funding and policy bodies under BEIS as a lead government department, without any significant policy links to the British Library (BIS 2011; Finch 2012; The Royal Society 2012; Tickell 2018).

It is also relevant to note that the development of Open Access policies coincided with the British Library’s decade long quest to ensure the UK non-print legal deposit legislation, with the Regulations finally agreed in 2013 (DCMS 2013). Gooding et al. (2019: 8) discuss the apparent contradiction of the lack of openness and difficulties of accessing information through the UK non-print legal deposit in the era of Open Access. The Regulations say that this content can be accessed only through the computer terminals based on the premises controlled by the deposit libraries (DCMS 2013: 8). This might be a suitable mechanism to ensure future preservation of this content, but this type of service is being insufficiently used (Gooding et al. 2019: 18-19), and it might be used even less in the future as new technologies and open sources of content and information continue to develop.

It is likely that dealing with the issues of Open Access and the non-print legal deposit at the same time was just too much for the British Library. However, we can also conclude that the Finch Report (Finch 2012) and the subsequent Open Access policies by the UK research funders (RCUK 2013) weakened the Library’s remits related to scientific publications.
7.5 Disruption and changing concepts of research infrastructure

The issues raised in relation to the British Library and the UK Open Access policies, as well as the broader issue of its digital research capabilities, are affected by the government policy and departmental fragmentation which we have already discussed in Chapter 5 (see page 170). This section intends to explore further evidence of how this governmental fragmentation affected the British Library.

This Chapter has already shown how the foundation and operational set up of the British Library was intended to represent a fundamental research infrastructure for the UK. The time of the British Library’s formation in the late 1960s and the early 1970s was a rare period with a greater than usual integration of relevant functions and policy on libraries in the government with all the relevant functions united in the Department of Education and Science (DES) (House of Lords 1967). During the already mentioned discussion in the House of Lords regarding the commissioning to the Dainton Report in 1967, Baroness Phillips explains -

*Here I must digress for a moment and refer to the fact that in 1964 and 1965 decisions on the grouping of functions under departments had resulted in virtually all aspects of library policy coming for the first time under a single Department—the Department of Education and Science. This arose from three quite different decisions. First, some functions of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research were in 1964 transferred to the old Ministry of Education, which became the Department of Education and Science, the Department directly concerned with the National Lending Library for Science and Technology. Secondly, under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 the Department became responsible centrally for local authority libraries and also for the grant-in-aid to the National Central Library, with its vitally important co-ordinating functions. Thirdly, the Department became responsible early in 1965 for the annual grant to the British Museum, including, of course, the Library. This concentration of responsibilities for libraries in a single Department*
had much to do with the growing awareness in the Government of the need for a new look in the interests of efficiency and economy at the whole of the library set-up. (House of Lords 1967: 1125-6)

Unfortunately for the British Library, this unique alignment of scientific, educational and information policy landscape, which has enabled its birth, was very brief and it disappeared much before its new building on St Pancras opened its doors in 1998. The Department of National Heritage (DNH) was formed in 1992 and subsequently transformed into DCMS, which became the British Library’s ‘home’ government department, and which over time influenced its functions and development (Selwood 2001). For the British Library this meant a need to adjust to a new situation in which some of its key functions, especially its science and research related functions, were not any longer the remit of its ‘home’ government department, resulting in a need to keep a set of complex cross-departmental relationships (House of Commons 2002, 2003; Follett 1993). This was especially important in the areas related to universities, science, technology and industry, and which led, on more than one occasion, to the situations where the British Library was relying on influence of the education and science governmental bodies to put pressure on DCMS to recognise its research functions and the resources they require. We have already seen it in the example recorded in the Evidence for the Fifth Report of the Select Committee for Education and Skills in 2002, considering library resources for higher education (House of Commons 2002). On this occasion the Committee concluded -

*We recognise that over fifty per cent of the British Library's activities are devoted to supporting higher education research. We are concerned that the Department for Education and Skills cannot support the activities of the British Library. Extra resources would have a disproportionally positive effect within the higher education establishment. We recommend that the Department for Education and Skills should work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that research resources for higher education institutions are sufficiently funded. (House of Commons 2002: Report, paragraph 29)*

Similar examples, testifying to the British Library’s uncomfortable
position in between different government departments, can be found throughout the Library’s existence. One such example is the British Library’s Funding Agreement from 2008-09 to 2010-11, which was drawn between the British Library and DCMS, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), and signed by Minister for Culture, Creative Industries and Tourism for DCMS, Minister for Science and Innovation for DIUS, Minister for Business & Competitiveness for BERR and Chairman of the British Library Board. The letter specifies different objectives for the British Library related to each of these departments, thus safeguarding the Library provision across all its organisational functions (DCMS, DIUS, BERR 2008 archival).

Figure 12 shows the transcribed objectives from the agreement, showing how key organisational KPIs for the British Library were allocated against different government departments in the British Library’s Funding Agreement from 2008-09 to 2010-11 (DCMS, DIUS, BERR 2008 archival).

| The British Library’s contribution to the delivery of Government Objectives 2008/09 – 2010/11 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contribution to DCMS objectives | Contribution to DIUS objectives | Contribution to BERR objectives |
| 1. Encourage more widespread enjoyment of culture, media and sport  
- Support public libraries, including working with the MLA, through the Regional Programmes accompanying British Library exhibitions, BL Champions events, and liaison with the Society of Chief Librarians.  
- Deliver a successful exhibition on Citizenship to be held in 2008/09.  
- Digitise a further 1m pages of 19th Century British newspapers, 4,000 hours of audio content, and at least 20m pages of out of copyright 19th Century printed books.  
- Maintain levels of engagement in the BL’s learning programme, | 1. Accelerate the commercial exploitation of creativity and knowledge, through innovation and research, to create wealth, grow the economy, build successful businesses and improve quality of life  
- Continue to operate reading room, web, and document supply services as an integral component of the national research infrastructure, to support knowledge transfer, and to ensure the research excellence of the UK.  
- Continue to develop and enhance the Business & IP Centre and services to support entrepreneurs and SMEs.  
- Continue to be a leading voice and honest broker in the Intellectual Property debate, including: In conjunction with DIUS and BERR, by seeking to develop the relationship between UK libraries, copyright owners | 1. Promote the creation and growth of business and a strong enterprise economy across all regions  
- Continue to operate reading room, web, and document supply services as an integral component of the national research infrastructure, to support knowledge transfer, and to ensure the research excellence of the UK.  
- Continue to develop and enhance the Business & IP Centre and services to support entrepreneurs and SMEs.  
- Continue to be a leading voice and honest broker in the Intellectual Property debate, including: In conjunction with DIUS and BERR, by seeking to develop the relationship between UK libraries, copyright owners |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution to DCMS objectives</th>
<th>Contribution to DIUS objectives</th>
<th>Contribution to BERR objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| focusing on secondary students and teachers. **2. Support talent and excellence in culture, media and sport**  
- Increase digital access to the national newspaper collection and ensure its long-term preservation.  
- Contribute to the cultural diplomacy agenda led by DCMS; extend programmes with overseas libraries and archives including the national libraries of China, India, Iran, Iraq, South Africa; participate fully in the DCMS World Collection initiative.  
- Secure the extensive record of UK published digital output, working with the Legal Deposit Advisory Panel and the other UK legal deposit libraries.  
- Complete the build of the Additional Storage Programme and implement the associated book moves and loading programme.  
- Continue to build the Digital Object Management System (DOMS) and implement for a range of content streams. **3. Realise the economic benefits of the Department’s sectors**  
- Continue to operate reading room, web, and document supply services as an integral component of the national research infrastructure and to ensure the research excellence of the UK.  
- Continue to develop and enhance the Business & IP Centre and services to support entrepreneurs and SMEs in the creative industries. | the Intellectual Property debate.  
**2. Pursue global excellence in research and knowledge, promote the benefits of science in society, and deliver science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills in line with employer demand**  
- Continue to operate reading room, web, and document supply services as an integral component of the national research infrastructure and to ensure the research excellence of the UK.  
- Secure the extensive record of UK published digital output. Implement the content strategy for Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, and develop content strategy for Science, Technology and Medicine.  
- Subject to funding for Phase II, offer a shared, integrated storage and access solution for library services in HE.  
- Develop our proposition direct to STM researchers; transform service and content delivery to Arts & Humanities; publish and implement a strategy for Social Science.  
- Enhance our baseline catalogues and data; implement Web 2.0 technologies; and identify technology options to and academic researchers so that the impact of media convergence on business models and readers’ consumption of content is better understood and taken into account. By identifying document delivery solutions which seek to strike a fair balance between safeguarding the interests of rights-holders and meeting the needs of academic researchers and other consumers to have easier access to a broader range of content. **2. Promote the availability and effective use of information and communication services and technology to drive economic growth:**  
- By working closely with the other UK legal deposit libraries to seek to create efficient and cost-effective systems of deposit and web harvesting. (cont.)  
- By working closely with the other UK legal deposit libraries on the development of the technical infrastructure for managing UK electronic legal deposit materials to seek to ensure that full interoperability is achieved. |
The British Library’s contribution to the delivery of Government Objectives 2008/09 – 2010/11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution to DCMS objectives</th>
<th>Contribution to DIUS objectives</th>
<th>Contribution to BERR objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Continue to be a leading voice and honest broker in the Intellectual Property debate.</td>
<td>aggregate search across collections.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. **Deliver a successful and inspirational Olympic and Paralympic Games that provides for a sustainable legacy**  
- Position the BL strongly within the Cultural Olympiad. | | |
| 5. **Value for Money (VFM) Savings**  
- Through its VFM Delivery Agreement with HM Treasury, DCMS is committed to generating 3% VFM savings over the three-year period 2008-11, and the Library has therefore been asked to meet the following targets:  
2008-09: £2.7m; 2009-10: £5.6m; 2010-11: £8.5m | | |

Figure 12 – British Library contribution to DCMS, BERR and DIUS objectives. From the British Library Funding Agreement 2008/09-2010/11 (DCMS, DIUS, BERR 2008 archival)

Figure 12 illustrates how the British Library functions such as the developments related to humanities and science, legal deposit, acquisitions and improvement of access to digital content, the operation of Document Supply and its collaboration with higher education, were defined as being outside the DCMS remit and were picked up by DIUS and BERR, including the Library’s objectives to ‘operate reading room, web, and document supply services as an integral component of the national research infrastructure’ (DCMS, DIUS & BERR 2008 archival).

While this example shows a very complex way to relate to the government, this proved to be an excellent situation compared to what is to follow. In the 2010 Spending Review the letter from Jeremy Hunt, as Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, following the change of government to the Conservative and Liberal austerity coalition in 2010, informed the Library that ‘grant in aid budget for your organisation will be cut
by 15% in real terms by 2014-15’ (DCMS 2010 archival). The subsequent cuts were to follow (BL 2013). While being almost lucky in comparison with public libraries (Woodhouse & Zayed 2019), the British Library experienced a significant loss of capacity over the last decade (BL 2011a&amp;bl 2013). While the organisation has not made many public statements about the overall impact of the austerity cuts, they can be illustrated by looking at the changes in its staffing and organisational capacity. For example, the British Library reduced its staff numbers by around 400 FTE or over 20 per cent between 2009 and 2019 - from 1,953 FTE in 2009/10 (BL 2011b: 66) to 1,507 in 2017-18, slightly rising to 1,555 FTE in 2018/19 (BL 2019b: 78). The acquisition budgets declined by 6.4m, or 44 per cent between 2004 and 2019 - from £16m in 2004/5 (BL 2004: 4) to £9.6m in 2018-19 (BL 2019b: 45) without accounting for inflation. An early day motion tabled by Keir Starmer MP, the British Library’s local MP at St Pancras, and signed by 21 MP, states that –

…the Library has made real-terms savings of 30 per cent to its budget, less than a third that of the Library of Congress, and less than three quarters that of France’s national library; recognises that further cuts to the British Library’s budget would undermine its economic contribution and damage its international status as one of the world’s greatest libraries; and urges the Government to protect the funding of the British Library from further cuts.

(House of Commons 2015: EDM #606)

The coalition government’s focus on austerity and another restructure of the machinery of government meant that a formal link with the newly formed Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), a successor department of DIUS and BERR, was never re-established (Interview G4.02). However, despite the rapid changes and funding cuts across public sector, including a constant change of civil servants, as well as extensive restructures of the machinery of government for higher education and research, many links across the government were preserved and the new ones established (Maricevic 2018; BL 2020, 2022). However, this was not done on the same strategy and policy level as previously, and certainly not in the way that is linked to the organisational objectives, KPIs, and the way that would inform the
Library’s spend. The strongest link to research ecosystem was now through the IRO status and the Library’s relationship with AHRC (BL 2019a, 2022).

In the recent years, with the uplift in science spending, the investments in the UK research infrastructure have become an important part of the UK science policy as we see in the UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap (UKRI 2019). In this document, all libraries, collections, and archives, including the British Library, are described as a part of the arts and humanities infrastructure -

The infrastructures in this sector consist of a large group that are concerned with allowing access to research objects. These objects can include physical research objects (in collections, libraries or archives), the digitised versions of these objects, or data derived from research or collected directly from source. (UKRI 2019: 55)

This represents a step forward when compared with the complete absence of such policies that could apply to the British Library. However, we can also see that we have arrived at a completely different point, where the idea of the national library as a distinct national interdisciplinary research infrastructure, and a specifically scientific infrastructure, was not retained. Following the prolonged austerity years, the extensive staff cuts and multiple internal restructures, the fragmented and chaotic policy environment in both research and culture, the seismic Open Access changes in science publication landscape, the disruptive higher education reforms, as well as constant machinery of government changes, we have arrived to the point where the British Library has become a research infrastructure again, but seemingly only for arts and humanities, and mainly on the account of digitised heritage rather than because it is a unique information infrastructure for research across all disciplines (UKRI 2019, 2020a&b).
7.6 The British Library’s strategy 1985-2015

7.6.1 Strategy analysis framework

This section investigates how the governmental changes over time have changed the way in which the British Library thinks about its purpose and priorities. It analyses the British Library strategies produced between 1985 and 2015 in order to understand how the British Library was changing in relation to the shifting policy context and other external pressures, especially in relation to the Library’s understanding of its role in the UK research.

Clarke (2012a &b unpublished) produced an internal overview of the British Library’s strategies, which was made available for this study. Clarke’s 2012 analysis focuses on eight British Library strategies, starting with the first one, Advancing with Knowledge, published in 1985 (BL 1985) and ending with two concurrent strategic documents - 2020 Vision (BL 2010a) and Growing Knowledge (BL 2011a). Clarke provides a comparison of the evolving visions, key priorities and themes, strategy development methodologies and organisational prioritisation. Clarke characterises these strategic documents as ‘intended to provide long-term direction in order to inform shorter-term planning’. (Clarke unpublished 2012a: 3-6).

Starting with this pre-existing analysis, this study tries to evaluate in more detail the Library’s strategic understanding of its research functions. Living Knowledge, the British Library’s strategy published in 2015, has been added to the Clarke’s previous work. The British Library published its latest strategy Knowledge Matters in May 2023. This strategy came too late to be included in the data analysis for this study. The available documentation, including the full text of the Library’s strategies, was entered into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, which was used to code, group and extract relevant information.

Figure 13 below shows the strategies used in the analysis provided in this Chapter, including the names of Chief Executive Officers at the time of each strategy, and the Library’s ‘home’ government department at the time of publication.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Strategy Period</th>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Government Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancing with Knowledge</td>
<td>1985-1990</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Kenneth Cooper</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway to Knowledge</td>
<td>1989-1994</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Kenneth Cooper</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives for the Year 2000</td>
<td>1993-2000</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Brian Lang</td>
<td>Department for National Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Strategic Direction</td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Lynne Brindley</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefining the Library</td>
<td>2005-2008</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Lynne Brindley</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Vision</td>
<td>2010-2020</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Lynne Brindley</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Knowledge</td>
<td>2015-2023</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Roly Keating</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13 - The British Library strategies 1985-2015

Prior to 1985, the British Library did not have a single strategy because it was in the early development phase and its planning was focused on the completion of St Pancras building, development of new operational systems and processes, and co-joining of its different constituent parts into one organisation. In relation to Figure 13, it is also worth noting that *Vision 2020* (2010) is a different type of document to other documents on the list, because it is a long-term vision document rather than a strategy, and it underpins the *Growing Knowledge: The British Library’s Strategy 2011-2015* (BL 2011a).

Clarke (unpublished 2012a) observes that all the Library’s mission statements have focused on knowledge - ‘to advance knowledge, to promote the advance of knowledge’ etc. - with the most frequently occurring themes including ‘support for society and the economy, our support for research, the
digital library, the importance of partnerships and the streamlining of services and operations’, but also showing -

...yo-yo effects across different strategies, in particular – the balance between our support for scholarship, research and innovation and wider public access; the relative importance of access to content compared to the content itself; and the funding allocations for acquisitions and preservation, which are sometimes prioritised and identified as important and sometimes made subject of efficiency measures and funding cuts.’ (Clarke 2012a:1 unpublished)

This observation also illustrates the difficulty in balancing the Library’s manifold remits and services especially within the organisation’s financial means. It also shows how these organisational strategies have a function to enable the Library to direct and prioritise its activities in financially challenging circumstances. The analysis shows that despite the ongoing process of reprioritisation and change, the overall framework of themes that are perceived as important and that appear in the Library’s description of its mission and vision is consistent, including the Library’s focus on research and scholarship, an intention to collaborate with other libraries and other relevant bodies, a commitment to preserve its collections and to enable better access, which is often linked to the use of new technology, preoccupation with defining and expanding its role in relation to born-digital and digitised content, and an ongoing balancing of public value and commercial activity, to mention only some themes that make consistent appearance in the Library’s strategic documents.

Figure 14 shows a comparison of the organisational purposes, vision, and mission across all Library strategies -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Purpose/Mission/Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancing with Knowledge</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Dual purpose of being the nation’s greatest source of information necessary for economic success and also an accessible repository of the knowledge and wisdom of the past which nourish the cognitive and affective parts of human nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway to Knowledge</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Our purpose is to advance knowledge: - to give ready access to our collections and to other significant collections and databases; - to pursue and promote research about the collection, preservation, communication and exploitation of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic objective for the year 2000</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Our function is to serve scholarship, research and enterprise. Our purpose is to promote the advance of knowledge through the communication of information and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic plan 1999-2002</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Library is a keystone of the UK academic infrastructure and an important resource for business and industry. It underpins developments in the environment, health, defence, and other priority policy areas for the nation. It enriches Britain’s cultural life and is one of the country’s most important contributions to the world. It will be a powerhouse of the new ‘knowledge society’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Strategic Directions</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>To foster pursuit of knowledge for the benefit of scholarship, research and innovation, and encourage the broadest possible awareness and accessibility of the Library's collections for the benefit of the citizen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefining the Library</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Helping people advance knowledge to enrich lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British Library's Strategy 2008-2011</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Advancing the World's Knowledge Vision: - We are central to the world of research, providing a trusted source of content that opens minds, solves problems and creates opportunities. - We provide services to anyone who wants to do research. We aim to provide both physical and digital access to world-class information where and when people need it. - We inspire people around the world with our outstanding content and expertise and we complement this by engaging the knowledge and expertise of others where it adds to the quality of experience for our users. - By providing these services effectively, the British Library plays a vital role in society and the economy, both today and for future generations. - We are central to the world of research, providing a trusted source of content that open minds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Vision</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Advancing the world’s knowledge Our vision: In 2020 the British Library will be a leading hub in the global information network, advancing knowledge through our collections, expertise and partnerships, for the benefit of the economy and society and the enrichment of cultural life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Knowledge</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Advancing the world’s knowledge Our vision: In 2020 the British Library will be a leading hub in the global information network, advancing knowledge through our collections, expertise and partnerships, for the benefit of the economy and society and the enrichment of cultural life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Knowledge</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>We make our intellectual heritage accessible to everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment 6 purposes: custodianship, research, business, culture, learning, international</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14 - Organisational purposes, vision and mission in the British Library Strategies 1985-2015

298
Working with these strategy documents affords a level of direct comparison as many sections of these documents such as mission, vision, objectives, financial constraints, analysis of external environment and organisational KPIs tend to appear in all these documents in a similar pattern, following the expected formulas for writing organisational strategies. However, the methodologies used to develop these strategies were somewhat different in each case (Clarke unpublished 2012a: 6-7). This enables us to code and compare the presence of different concepts and their importance throughout this period, and in this way develop a more detailed picture of the Library’s strategic thinking over thirty-year period.

Appendix E (see page 545) provides a table which pulls out these key themes after the coding has been done into several comparable sections, and which include - organisational purposes, vision, and mission; aims; objectives; financial strategy, assumptions and constraints; major considerations; and specific performance measures of progress and KPIs.

7.6.2 NVivo analysis of key themes across all British Library strategic documents

The NVivo analysis of key themes across all strategies indicates that research was important to the British Library throughout this period and that it sits in the top tier of the organisational strategic concerns alongside library collections, services, digital developments, and access. Figure 15 shows the themes that the British Library has considered to be strategically important over time, based on the classification in NVivo.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes (NVivo nodes)</th>
<th>Sub theme (NVivo sub-node)</th>
<th>No. of references</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other libraries</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public and private partners</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared services and bringing organisations together</td>
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<td>Non-print, electronic legal deposit</td>
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<td>Inspiration, enjoyment, enrichment</td>
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<td>Human enquiry and curiosity</td>
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<td>Link with past, memory</td>
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<td>Education services and learning</td>
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<td>Awareness and promotion</td>
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<td>Exhibitions</td>
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<td>IP and copyright</td>
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<td>Trust, neutral position</td>
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<td>Events</td>
<td>General</td>
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<td>Centre for the Book</td>
<td>General</td>
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<td>Crowdsourcing, co-creation</td>
<td>General</td>
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Figure 15 - NVivo analysis of key themes in the British Library strategies 1985-2015
The coding of different themes and sub-themes enables us to follow the change related to different issues over time. For example, if we look into the sub-theme of collaborating with higher education sector, we can start to see how the British Library’s relationship with the sector has developed over time – from the British Library seeing higher education as a customer for its services in the *Advancing with Knowledge* (BL 1985), to a confident assertion that the British Library is a ‘cornerstone’ of the UK higher education and research, which represented over 60% of the Library’s activity in the *New Strategic Direction* in 2002 (BL 2002a), all the way to *Living Knowledge* in 2015 with much lower higher education presence. *Living Knowledge* acknowledges –

*At a time of continuing change for libraries in both technology and operating models, our challenge is to find new ways for the British Library to play its traditional supporting role at the centre of the library system as a whole, across the public and academic sectors.*

*(BL 2015: 8)*

Bearing in mind that the British Library’s terminology tends to make distinction between higher education as a sector, as opposed to individual researchers or disciplinary research functions, Figure 16 shows key statements made about higher education as a sector across all Library’s strategic documents. This information enables us to start making links between the Library’s strategic thinking and external developments and changes in higher education, which we have already seen in the part of this Chapter looking at the Library’s link with higher education sector, but through a different lens.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Strategy Period</th>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>Higher Education statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancing with Knowledge</td>
<td>1985-1990</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>(external consideration) reductions in expenditure on acquisitions in British public and academic libraries over the past five years (objective) to assist those other libraries which are well placed to contribute significantly and at reasonable cost to the national collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway to Knowledge</td>
<td>1989-1994</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>(purpose) It underpins the work of academic, public, commercial and other special libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives for the Year 2000</td>
<td>1993-2000</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>(objective) We shall continue to support industry, business and higher education through the provision of relevant information services and publications, taking advantage of technological advances (external consideration) Continuing growth in publishing and expansion of the universities old and new against the public sector financial constraint, 'the need for a strong national research collection and the demand for services from the Library is certain to rise'. (purpose) Underpins academic activity and scholarship in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan 1999-2002</td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>(purpose) The Library is a keystone of the UK academic infrastructure and an important resource for business and industry. (objective) Forge new partnerships with other institutions, particularly in the higher education sector: we recognise the increasing need to work closely with other libraries to optimise use of resources, provide complementary collections and services, and minimise duplication (external consideration) The higher education sector is developing access to electronic publications, while publishers, telecommunications companies, and information providers have joined forces to explore new opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Strategic Direction</td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>(purpose) We serve all areas of education, business and industry, the medical profession, independent writers and researchers, local and national government and the library and information sector. (KPI, measure of achievement) The cornerstone of the UK Higher Education and research infrastructure and 60% of our work is in support of this sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefining the Library</td>
<td>2005-2008</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>(purpose) We support the higher education objectives of the Department for Education and Skills by supporting academic research across all subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Strategy Period</td>
<td>Year of publication</td>
<td>Higher Education statements</td>
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| The British Library Strategy                     | 2008-2011        | 2008                | (objective) Connect national discovery and delivery services more effectively in partnership with the JISC and Research Libraries UK.  
(objective) Participate in the JISC's Libraries of the Future campaign.  
(objective) Offer shared, integrated storage and access for library services in higher education.  
(objective) Determine, in collaboration with the research councils and the higher education community, our role in facilitating discovery and access to datasets.  
(objective) Deliver a central repository that underpins UK higher education research by offering improved and streamlined access to information resources.  
(KPI, measure of achievement) In partnership with the Joint Information Systems Committee we have digitised 4,000 hours of archival sound recordings and one million pages of historic British newspapers, which are available online to higher and further education users. |
| 2020 Vision                                      | 2010-2020        | 2010                | (objective) Shared service programmes of benefit to knowledge institutions, facilitating a reduction in the total cost of the network through sharing resources and avoiding duplication.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Growing Knowledge: The British Library's Strategy | 2011-2015        | 2011                | (external consideration) Given the drive for universities and businesses to work together, the Library has an important role to play by bringing a closer alignment to our business and higher education marketing functions, engaging more with those academics who go on to join and/or create businesses, and supporting new entrants to get their business models right.                                                                                       |
| Living Knowledge                                 | 2015-2023        | 2015                | (objective) Just as many university libraries have transformed their spaces over the past five years, with new environments for collaborative or informal working, so we have begun to create new generations of research spaces such as the multimedia Newsroom in St Pancras. As demand grows, we will open up more varied study environments and ensure that our on-site services meet our users' need for the widest possible range of content made easily and instantly available.  
(external consideration) At a time of continuing change for libraries in both technology and operating models, our challenge is to find new ways for the British Library to play its traditional supporting role at the centre of the library system as a whole, across the public and academic sectors. |

Figure 16 - Higher education related statements in the British Library strategies 1985-2015
We can immediately recognise the underlying presence of the British Library Act, which mandates the Library to provide services to higher education (Acts of Parliament 1972), but also a commercial underpinning of its key services as set in the Dainton Report (House of Commons 1969: 137). Looking at Figure 16, it is almost possible to follow the curve of the rise and fall of Document Supply (see Figure 11). First three strategies appear very confident about the British Library’s role in the provision of services to higher education, with the Document Supply service characterised as an underpinning service for higher education, provided at cost and essential in the circumstances of the continuous growth in scholarly publication activity and the expansion of student numbers (BL 1985, 1989, 1993). In these early strategies the relationship with higher education is not described as a partnership or a collaboration, but as a provision of service. This changes in 1999 in the Strategic Plan 1999-2002 (BL 1999a). At this time the Document Supply provision started to fall, and the document recognised the rise of electronic scholarly publishing (BL 1999a: 2). The same document indicates the need for partnership with higher education, which at this point becomes one of the Library’s strategic objectives (BL 1999: 1). The significance of this change and the subsequent adjustments in the Library’s strategic outlook shows clearly in the very titles of the next two strategies – New Strategic Direction (BL 2002a) and Redefining the Library (BL 2004).

From 2004, we can see that the new strategies are starting to bear fruit as the types of activities and the range of collaborations with higher education broadens, culminating in the British Library Strategy 2008-2011 (BL 2008), which includes a range of very specific objectives related to collaborative services and projects with higher education, many focusing on the projects funded by or delivered in collaboration with Jisc (BL 2008: Strategic Priority 2).

As it can be expected, the tone changes again in 2010, with the change of government and the austerity public sector cuts, at which point we see the prevalence of themes such as shared services, avoiding of duplication and economies of scale, which were the key themes of government policy across public services during the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government, so we find these themes reflected in the Library’s thinking regarding its relationship with higher education (BL 2010: 10).

However, by 2015, we see another radical change, where one higher
education reference appears to be related to the British Library’s reading rooms and working spaces with a view that the British Library should emulate higher education developments (BL 2015: 16). This signals a start of yet another strategic direction, pointing to the start of planning for the British Library’s new capital developments on the existing British Library sites in St Pancras and Boston Spa, as well as the exploration of a potential for a new site in Leeds (BL 2015, 2020). But this also shows a major gap that has opened in relation to higher education during the austerity years, with higher education making major investments in modernising and building new libraries on the back of the new tuition fees, which provided both cash and impetus to invest in university libraries (Plimmer & Viña 2016). At the same time national and public libraries were experiencing funding cuts. Thus, the British Library identified a need to catch up with the latest development in design and the changing uses of library spaces in higher education.

It is also clear that, by this stage, the gap has opened wide in other ways. While the theme of collaborating to achieve efficiencies stays relevant (BL 2015: 13), the online transition of scholarly publication and research environment has rendered the British Library’s traditional service model almost irrelevant, and Living Knowledge acknowledges that the Library requires an entirely different model if it is to remain at the centre of the UK library system, both academic and public (BL 2015: 8).

7.6.4 British Library strategies in the context of research policy

The Library’s first strategy Advancing with Knowledge (1985) confidently traces its roots ‘back to the British Museum Act of 1753, which charged the British Museum to care for three important collections of books, manuscripts and papers’ (BL 1985: 7), which included Cotton, Harley and Sloane collections. But it also emphasises DSIR policy requirements ‘to cater for the special needs of scientists and technologists’ (BL 1985: 7). Thus, this first strategy proclaims –

*The British Library occupies the central and pre-eminent position in the UK library and information system, and is of key importance in the cultural and economic life of the country. On the cultural side its unique resources make it a library of first resort for experienced scholars in the*
humanities for all countries. The comprehensiveness of the collections make it a library of last resort for many others. On the economic side, it plays a direct part in the advancement of science and technology, and so in the ability of the nation to earn its living. (BL 1985: 9)

This statement stems from the Library’s founding expectation that the improved remote lending and availability of scientific literature will directly contribute to the UK economic growth (House of Commons 1969; House of Lords 1971). To achieve this the Library’s lending service aims to provide enhanced services for industry and business (BL 1985: 23). The Science Reference section adds to its objectives a range of areas that it wishes to specifically target, including innovation, business and commerce, biotechnology, information technology, and Japanese literature of use to UK industry (BL 1985: 20).

Looking at the Libraries strategic documents, the links between the Library’s research activities and UK science and industrial policies appears to be very straightforward until the early 2000s. Even when there are significant issues to contend with, such as reductions in budgets, the Library's strategies continue to include links with the national science, technology and industrial policies. The presence of science and industrial policies remains strongly present even during the change of the Library’s ‘home’ government department to DNH in 1992 and subsequently to DCMS in 1997. The changes of the Library’s ‘home’ department do not appear to change its strategic language, which continues to be aligned to the UK research and industrial policies (BL 1993, 1999a&b). In the Objectives for Year 2000, published in 1993, this strategy states – ‘Our function is to serve scholarship, research and enterprise’ (BL 1993: 9). We see similar commitments in the Strategic Plan 1999-2002 -

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom and aims to be the world’s leading resource for scholarship, research, and innovation. (BL 1999a: 1)

This document even claims that it the Library will give higher priority to grant-in-aid support ‘for services for scholarship, research, and innovation than for services for a wider public audience’ (BL 1999b: 4). This decision was reached through an extensive consultation process, and was responding to the users’ concerns ‘that the Library should reverse the erosion of spending on acquisitions and conservation’ (BL 1999a: 3). This strategy states that it will contribute to the
following government priorities –

- *Contribution still more effectively to scholarship, research and innovation.*
- *Supporting learning in the widest sense.*
- *Providing access to knowledge and information for all who need to use the Library’s collection.*
- *Improving further its already extensive services to business and industry.*
- *Reinforcing the UK’s achievement in science, technology, medicine, and innovation.*
- *Building closer links with public libraries, academic libraries, and others in such a way that the overall strength of library provision for research, scholarship, and innovation is sustained and enhanced.*
- *Providing access for the general public through exhibitions, education, events, and publishing programmes.* (BL 1999a: 12)

In *Redefining Library* strategy in 2004 the British Library committed to contribute to priorities of several government departments – DCMS, DfES, OST and HM Treasury (BL 2004: 5). This strategy described the Library as a research infrastructure. One of the key projects was described as follows –

*We’re collaborating on the development of the national e-infrastructure, under the aegis of the Office of Science and Technology. Our partners include the Cabinet Office, DCMS, DfES, the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE), Jisc, the Research Libraries Network, RCUK and the individual Research Councils.* (BL 2004: 9)

2020 Vision, published in 2010, spells out the Library’s need to fit across different government departments –

*The Library is primarily funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with significant self-generated commercial income, and makes an important contribution to DCMS’s key objectives. In supporting and sustaining both the research excellence of the UK and its commercial competitiveness, we contribute also to the objectives of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.* (BL 2010a: 1)
From this period, we have already seen the Library’s funding agreement letter with the objectives split across DCSM, DIUS and BERR (DCMS, DIUS and BERR 2008 archival, see Figure 12).

There is no doubt that in this strategy the Library was seeking to confirm its links with the research and industrial policy context and governmental departments within its strategic documents. However, this became more difficult with the acceleration of change in the scholarly publishing environment and especially with the move of scientists away from using remote lending and the British Library services. To adapt, the British Library explored a range of alternative solutions, such as, the never-realised National Digital Library, an intended collaborative project with the Cabinet Office, DCMS, DfES, HEFCE, Jisc, Research Libraries Network and RCUK. *Redefining the Library* (BL 2004: 9) attempted to redefine the British Library’s priorities by using a research information cycle model (BL 2004: 6). In this and its next strategy, the British Library sought to strengthen its disciplinary research focus and understanding of user needs in different disciplines. Accordingly, *British Library Strategy 2008 – 2011* (BL 2008), in addition to a range of objectives related to higher education, announced a range of objectives aligned to the Research Councils’ priorities in arts and humanities, social sciences and STM (BL 2008). This strategy deepened the Library’s focus on supporting different academic disciplines, as well as interdisciplinary research.

*Living Knowledge* in 2015 (BL 2015) was an entirely different type of strategy, seemingly based on its predecessor strategies, especially *2020 Vision* (BL 2015: 4), but in effect doing something quite different. It was seeking ‘a fusion of science and culture, of old and new, of high-level research and popular engagement’ (BL 2015: 5). While research and even the-radically-reduced-but-still-surviving Document Supply, now re-branded as the *British Library On Demand*, were still there (BL 2015: 16-17), there is no doubt that the British Library was starting to express its strategic vision as a cultural organisation, while retaining some important research functions. It was not any longer an organisation seeking to be an integral part of the UK research infrastructure. This was clear even in the new vision. The old British Library mission - ‘Advancing the world’s knowledge’ - introduced in the *British Library Strategy 2008-11* (BL 2008) was replaced with a new vision - ‘We make our intellectual heritage accessible to
everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment’ (BL 2015: 3).

In *Living Knowledge* (BL 2015) research became one of six equal purposes, others being Custodianship, Culture, Business, International and Learning. Custodianship was introduced as the Library’s first and core purpose with an aim to ‘build, curate and preserve the UK’s national collection of published, written and digital content’ (BL 2015: 12-13), adopting much more passive, museum-like role of care for heritage collections, which was in sharp contrast with the previous Library’s strategic emphasis on participating in knowledge creation and seeing its place within the research cycle (BL 2004). Research itself became ‘research of all kinds’ (BL 2015), a concept that is completely different to the previous focus on understanding individual disciplinary needs (BL 2008). Science was not mentioned at all. The Library’s commitment to business was completely interpreted through the work of the Library’s Business and IP Centre (BIPC) and the Knowledge Quarter partnership, rather than anything to do with scientific information to industry. There was only a small mention of Document Supply, almost only as a legacy service (BL 2015: 20-21). The strongest remaining research links were the British Library’s arts and humanities research in its role as an IRO, and the introduction of partnership with Alan Turing Institute, the UK data science and AI institute, which was to base its headquarters to the British Library (BL 2015: 6,17). Therefore, this case study shows an organisational journey from a research and science orientated public institution, assured about its role within the UK research infrastructure and its key role in serving research, innovation, and business to a predominantly cultural organisation with some integrated research functions. The detail data regarding aims and objectives, financial considerations and KPIs from the British Library’s strategies 1985-2015 are set in Appendix E (page 545).
7.7 Conclusion

The British Library creation was informed by two different requirements – (1) to create more space for the constrained British Museum Library (Wilson 2002), and (2) to create a national research infrastructure that would ensure better remote access to the growing scientific literature, which was required to aid the post-war economic recovery (Urquhart 1990, House of Commons 1969). The extensive parliamentary discussions at the time of its formation confirm that this was to be a new organisation, which would be interdisciplinary in nature and serving several key constituencies – industry, science, humanities researchers, higher education, and general public (House of Lords 1971; Act of Parliament 1972). The British Library’s founding context draws on the policies first formulated by DSIR (Urquhart 1954; McNinch 1949), and later by Department for Education and Science (House of Commons 1969), especially in relation to the growing need to improve access to scientific information for industry, achieve better efficiencies and coordination across the UK library landscape, and underpin the expanding UK higher education system (House of Lords 1967; UGC 1967). The policy context includes an expectation of the British Library’s central role in the UK interconnected system of libraries, with its services being essential ‘in particular to institutions of education and learning, other libraries and industry’ (Acts of Parliament 1972). Therefore, during the formation of the British Library we see both cultural and scientific policy drivers at work.

The analysis of the British Library strategies over the thirty-year period, as well as its activities, suggest that the Library saw itself predominantly as a research infrastructure until relatively recently (BL 1985, 1993, 1999a&b, 2004). However, during this time, we can see many signs that the Library found it difficult to fit its remit with its ‘home’ government department, or any single part of government. The Library’s strategies document many instances of attempting to fit across cultural, educational and research policy and across many different government departments (BL 2004). This is most clearly seen in its Funding Agreement 2008/09 – 2010/11, which splits the Library’s objectives across DCMS, DIUS and BERR (DCMS, DIUS and BERR 2008 archival).

The situation further changes during the austerity cuts and multiple machinery of government changes in the first decade of the 21st century, which meant that the formal policy links with the research infrastructure and policy was
lost. This is reflected in *Living Knowledge* (BL 2015), the Library’s strategy published in 2015, which retains the importance of research purpose for the Library in the IRO context, but it does not include any systemic links with the prevailing science and higher education policies. This does not mean that the British Library is not continuing to develop its research functions, but it does mean that they are radically different in relation to what was intended when the organisation came into being. The British Library research functions today are closely related to the IRO context and a range of specialisations in collection-based arts and humanities fields including digital humanities, rather than to its key founding purpose as a supplier of scientific information. *Living Knowledge* strategy (BL 2015) shows that the British Library’s identity as a cultural institution has become much stronger than it was before.

The British Library has significant future plans for building new cultural spaces as a part of its intended capital projects in London and Leeds (BL 2020: 5-6). This indicates that there will be further changes of the British Library’s organisational purposes towards increasing its public spaces and the volume of its cultural provision (BL 2015 & 2023). These findings contribute significantly to our hypothesis that the UK national cultural organisations have experienced a gradual move from predominantly science-led strategy and policy drivers to more dominant culture-led strategic and policy drivers.

The most substantive organisational change in the first decade of the 21st century relates to the change of the British Library’s role related to scientific literature, including the decline of Document Supply, and the emergence of the UK Open Access policies (Brindley 2002a, 2005). It is unclear to what extent the Library’s exclusion from the Open Access policies and implementation was caused by the British Library itself due to its lack of readiness to adapt its systems and technologies to the new circumstances, or by the changes in external scientific environment, and possibly due to other organisations and interests competing in this space. Either way, it is undeniable that the British Library role in this context becomes surprisingly weak (Finch 2012; Tickell 2016), especially if we consider the Library’s historic remits (Act of Parliament 1972; UGC 1967; BL 2004, 2008). It is likely that its governmental position outside the main research sphere has contributed to this change (Interview G4.02), but further research is required to understand this complex policy area. However, the
turbulent and unstable policy and governmental context of the last two decades has meant that scientific publication changes have been taking place in the absence of any specific governmental policy focus on the evolving role of national libraries in relation to research and science. This example as such contributes to our hypothesis that the on-going fragmentation of the UK cultural and science policies negatively affects research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. In the case of the British Library, this case study shows that the combination of governmental and scientific changes led to significant changes of organisational purpose since its foundation and in relation to its founding intent.

We do not know yet what will be the impact of these changes. While the scientific publishing industry is continuing to develop new business models and embrace new technologies that serve scientists immediate needs, we do not know what long-term impact on availability, access, and preservation of research content will be. Legal deposit provision provides some guarantees for future access and preservation for the published outputs of research. However, considering the changing nature of science, research outputs now frequently including datasets, code, software and other types of information, which is not collected by the British Library, and also not covered by a unified national policy that defines this remit as someone else’s responsibility, it is likely that the future access, and therefore reproducibility in science will become increasingly challenging and fragmented across many different repositories, aggregators, commercial preservation systems, universities and scientific publishers. Many believe that AI will solve this problem and also accelerate scientific discovery (Chub 2022), but the issues of transparency, bias and reproducibility still remain significant and become even more complex with AI technologies (Gibney 2022).

In terms of the British Library, we can see that it is seeking new ways to link with scientific environment, such as through its links with the Alan Turing Institute and most recently embracing AI and machine learning, primarily utilising data derived from its collections (BL 2023: 15). It also remains a unique source of primary resources for all research disciplines. The British Library’s latest strategy Knowledge Matters also indicates further new developments, such as an intent to provide space for life science companies and labs in its new St Pancras development, to improve access to its datasets, and there is a new emphasis on public engagement with science (BL 2023). While this would add
value and open up new opportunities, the loss of capacity and remits in regard to scientific information within the British Library could yet turn to be damaging to the UK science in long-term.
8 The Natural History Museum: cultural organisations and scientific progress

8.1 Introduction

Image 21 - Cast of woolly rhinoceros carcass at the National History Museum. Coelodonta antiquitatis, Late Pleistocene, Poland. Author’s own photo

This case study investigates how the Natural History Museum has changed its strategy and business model to respond to its own financial pressures during the 1990s. This theme continues the investigation of the previous two case studies and, as such, is adding to our hypothesis that in the late 1990s the pressures in policy and funding environment created a series of critical junctures that led to significant changes in research functions of the UK national cultural organisations. Just as in the case of the British Museum (see page 204), this subject relates to the theme of the role of governance in transforming research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. The Natural History Museum changes in the 1990s were implemented in a top-down fashion and provide further detail regarding the role of directors and trustees in these change processes.

The case study also examines how the Natural History Museum has transformed its scientific model from one based on curatorial research and
taxonomy-based science to a model based on the UK science policy underpinned by the concept of grand challenges. This will help investigate in more detail how challenges and advances in specific disciplinary fields, in this case in taxonomy and systematic biology, have led to changes in research functions at the Natural History Museum. This study’s hypothesis is that such disciplinary changes can lead to both advancement and decline of relevant research function in the UK national research organisations. In the British Library case study we have seen how changes in scientific publication landscape led to decline in the related research functions of the British Library. The Natural History Museum case studies shows advancement in certain areas of science, but also some unresolved issues in the areas of curatorial, collection-based research.

The case study will also explore the UK parliamentary inquiries into the crisis of taxonomy and systematic biology, and how they relate to Natural History Museum. The changes in this area of science and its links with the policy landscape are essential to understand the changes made by the Museum in relation to its research functions. They also show how governmental actors can fail to act to support certain research areas, even when they identify that there is a policy rationale to protect them. This will add further evidence to support our hypothesis that the on-going fragmentation of the UK cultural and science policies negatively affects research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. Overall, this case study contributes to our research questions regarding key characteristics of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, the nature of interactions between institutions and government, as well as different tensions and difficulties arising for institutions in this area.
8.2 Financial difficulties and transformation in the 1990s

8.2.1 Curatorial job losses and organisational transformation

The Natural History Museum in London is to shed one in six science jobs in the next three years, according to the Museum’s 1990-95 corporate plan, released last Monday.

The director of the museum, Neil Chalmers, says that he intends the plan to “concentrate our research effort into a series of programmes concerned with environmental, human wealth and human health issues”, and adding that “by doing this we plan to avoid the weakness that can arise from spreading ourselves too thinly over too many areas – trying to be all things to all people”.

Behind these words lies the hard truth that 98 per cent of the museum’s government grant is swallowed by salaries, and jobs will have to go if the museum is to remain flexible and pursue its reorganisation plans. By 1992-93, the current staff of 780 will have been cut by 100.

(Gee 1990a: 805)

The above text, which appeared in Nature in April 1990, is just one of many such articles in both general and scientific press at the time, discussing financial difficulties, staff cuts and the unfolding crisis at the Natural History Museum (Griffin 1990a&b; Halstead 1990a&b; Nature 1990a&b). In April 1990 researchers at the Natural History Museum went on strike, protesting the loss of 51 research and curatorial posts (Griffin 1990b), which was announced in the Museum’s Corporate Plan 1990-95 (NHM DF941/4 1990 archival). Griffin reports that of the 51 positions to be lost, 12 are in taxonomic entomology, 6 in studies of fossil birds, mammals and plants, and 10 in various curation areas (Griffin 1990b). It has also been reported that this came on top of a total of 50 posts that have been lost since 1983, and further 40 posts remaining unfilled (Griffin 1990b; NHM DF941/4 archival 1990:9).

The plan led to an international protest from scientists, learned societies and other museums, who were especially concerned with the perceived damage that, it was feared, would be done to the worldwide taxonomic and systematics research, and which is described as “deeply unsexy”, but essential for research
underpinning our understanding of biodiversity (Gee 1990a&b; Halstead 1990a&b; Rhodes 1990; Nature 1990a&b). Even David Attenborough was among those who met with the Museum’s Director to express his disapproval of the direction taken, and his disapproval was a very bad omen for one’s approval ratings even in the 1990s (Griffin 1990b).

The Unions were unhappy with the lack of consultation with staff in the preparation of the new corporate plan (Gee 1991). It has been reported that the Museum’s staff believed that the senior managers did not fully understand the nature of their scientific and curatorial work (Griffin 1990b). The cuts were also seen as being deliberately and disproportionately targeted towards science and curation activities in an attempt to release resources to improve exhibition staffing and design, as well as education programmes for younger age groups (Griffin 1990a&b; Lucas et al. ed. 1990: 390; Tait 1990). The aspect of the plan that was particularly questioned by the critics is the Museum’s new strategic direction, especially the Museum’s belief that the more commercial direction of travel will save it from its financial predicament (Nature 1990a&b).

The Corporate Plan 1990-95 (NHM DF941/4 1990 archival) itself is a document that appears to be trying to balance the Museum’s multiple commitments, while extracting maximum support from the Office of Arts and Libraries (OAL) and dealing with the areas that require modernisation. This includes ‘a new management structure for curation that focusses taxonomic research on a series of programmes concerned with environmental, human wealth and human health issues’ (NHM DF941/4 archival 1990: 2), but it also includes fixing a leaky roof on the Museum’s Waterhouse building and replacement of the Ruislip stores, as well as a plan to outsource the Museum’s exhibition programme (NHM DF941/4 archival 1990: 3). The plan can be read as a document written to persuade the government to make up the projected financial shortfall of £4.4 million (NHM DF941/4 archival 1990: 9). The funding request is set within the broader plan that is trying to explain how the Museum will improve its future sustainability. This includes the need for better prioritisation of resources, while also continuing to deliver in its priority areas – from taxonomy to contributing to the National Curriculum. The plan also includes the pledge to increase funding from commercial sources (NHM DF941/4 archival).

The Corporate Plan 1990-95 (NHM DF941/4 1990 archival) was written
following the government request and guidance on a type of document required and set in a letter from Charles Henderson, Head of Office of Arts and Libraries (OAL) to Neil Chalmers (NHM DF941/4 archival, OAL Henderson letter 2 February 1990). This type of plan was requested by the OAL from all national museums at the time, asking them to develop corporate plans considering in particular ‘performance measures and targets’ and ‘the drive for value for money’. The request included a guidance on financial performance set by the accountancy firm Ernst and Whinney based on their work done at British Museum and Science Museum. The policy related requests include the requirement to consider how will the Museum’s schools programme support 1988 Education Reform Act. The letter references the Museums Training Institute set by the OAL to tackle career development issues across the sector, and the support for the Museums and Galleries Commission’s Traveling Exhibitions Unit (NHM DF941/4 archival, OAL Henderson letter 2 February 1990). The Corporate Plan 1990-95 (NHM DF941/4 1990 archival) duly responds to these requests, as well as attempting to chart its own way forward. The aim of the exercise is very clearly to deal with the financial crisis affecting all areas of the Museum, not just its research functions.

8.2.2 Natural History Museum in the context of the 1990s museum crisis

The story of financial difficulties and organisational changes resulting in staff cuts and reduction of curatorial roles is very similar to the situation we have already explored in relation to the British Museum at the time of the Edwards Review (Edwards 1996 unpublished, also see Chapter 6, page 227). The peak of the British Museum troubles occurred a few years later than at the Natural History Museum, with most of the critical public and press attention taking place between 1996 and 2001. However, many underlying reasons for these two situations were similar. Other UK national cultural organisations were experiencing similar issues at the time, most prominently V&A and Science Museum (Lucas et al. ed. 1990; Burton 1999). Some of the reasons behind so many institutions ending up in financial difficulties during the 1990s include the long period of acute underinvestment under the Thatcher government, an even longer period of sluggish public investment and neglect throughout the post-war period, high inflationary cost rises, as well as a need to invest in modernising museum practice
on all levels – from exhibitions and public offer to research, but also the way in which institutions were managed and financed (Griffin 1990b; Nature 1990a&b; Bodmer 1990; Selwood 2001; Wilson 1989, 2002; Burton 1999). The shared characteristics also include a need for new spaces, especially new gallery and public spaces, which is very evident in the Natural History Museum situation (Bodmer 1990, Lucas et. al. 1990), and which has given rise to a concept of the so-called Disneyfication of museum experience (Nature 1990a; Lucas et. al. 1990). This term refers mostly to a way of structuring museum experiences to provide entertainment in addition to education, as well as introducing features that encourage consumption by visitors. The Natural History Museum’s management team were especially criticised at the time for making an actual trip to Disneyland, which they claimed was needed to aid their planning of the more public friendly and attractive facilities and services (Griffin 1990: 11).

Another shared characteristic, in addition to underfunding, is the low level of understanding of their research and scientific remits in the government, specifically within the Office of Arts and Libraries (OAL). This accusation was very explicitly formulated by the numerous critics of cuts at Natural History Museum. Gee claimed, based on other internal documents that he has seen, that the Corporate Plan 199-95 (NHM archive 1990) was initially drawn ‘as a rearguard action’ after a long battle with the OAL, ‘which sees the museum more as a public attraction than a scientific institution’ (Gee 1990a: 805). Nature’s editorial covering this situation did not spare any punches in its conclusion that the Museum requires a new plan, which will persuade OAL and, ultimately, Treasury, by providing ‘a more intelligent statement of its aspirations for the continuation of research at the museum’ (Nature editorial 1990: 397), concluding –

*What NHM should have learned from the commotion of the past several weeks is that it is not just another British research institution, as disposable as Kleenex, but one whose research function is genuinely international. The museum should have been particularly stung by those who have donated their personal collections to the museum in the belief that it was a perpetual institution. NHM’s collections and their investigation have a better claim on such a status than most other research collections. The trustees would now seem to have a stark choice: either to exert themselves so as to redress the balance between*
exhibition and research, if necessary making nuisances of themselves in the process, or to resolve to dispose of the collection to some institution elsewhere that will be able to use it properly. (Nature 1990b: 398)

Neil Chalmers maintained throughout this crisis that the OAL ‘has been very understanding and sympathetic to our scientific activities’ (Gee 1990b: 4). Walter Bodmer, the Museum’s Chair, defended the Museum’s relationship with the OAL as follows -

Until 1987 the museum was funded by the Department of Education and Science, through the ‘science vote’ that pays for the research councils, on the basis of its role as a major research organization. But there were many people at the time who argued that the science vote was not the appropriate source of support for activities such as the maintenance of the museum’s collections and exhibitions, and the upkeep of its historic building. For this reason the Office of Arts and Libraries, which looks after the other major national museums and galleries, seemed a better home. The NHM is unique in its mixture of scientific research and the more traditional museum activities and, notwithstanding our present difficulties, has found a welcome place in the Office of Arts and Libraries. This change has also provided the museum with new opportunities for additional research support from the research council system.

(Bodmer 1990: 569)

As well as being active in managing the public debate, which never happened during the British Museum crisis, for example, Bodmer’s statement, as well as Chalmer’s position (Gee 1990b: 4) were useful in managing the ongoing dialogue with the government regarding any funding shortfalls. At the same time, while the press activity seems to be directed against the Museum’s management and their plans, the debate in the press was most likely helpful to the overall aims of the Museum. The commotion raised the stakes and put pressure on the government (NHM DF933/80 & DF933/83 archival). The Museum did its own lobbying work, including lining up MPs Mark Fisher and Tam Dalyell to ask the questions about the Museum’s funding in the House of Commons. (NHM 933/80 archival, Letters from Neil Chalmers to T Dalyell MP and Mark Fisher MP 1990; House of Commons 20 June 1990). Thanks to their intervention the situation was debated in the House of Commons on 20 June 1990 (House of Commons 1990).
Neil Chalmers noted his telephone conversation with Ian Baxter at the OAL day before the Commons debate, including that he was not happy ‘about the Ministers quoted figure of 12.8% increase in Grant in Aid in real terms over 10 years’, which in his view was a 5% decline (NHM DF933/80 archival, Neil Chalmers telephone conversation with Ian Baxter OAL, 19 June 1990). The Minister for the Arts, Richard Luce, was quizzed by two MPs on these issues, pressing the point that ‘The Museum has made it clear on all occasions that if it was adequately funded by the government, it would not have to make these extremely difficult scientific decisions’. The Minister kept his answers within the governmental line that the Museum’s funding was adequate and even increased. (House of Commons 1990).

Figure 17 shows how the finances looked like from the Museum’s point of view, especially accounting for the high level of inflation at the time –

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<th>Natural History Museum Corporate Plan 1990-95, transcript of the projected Grant-in-Aid Against inflation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grant in Aid</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Increases per annum</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Museum projection</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Salary inflation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Requirement to Maintain Grant in Real Terms</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Shortfall</strong></td>
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Figure 17 - Grant-in-aid against inflation presented in the Natural History Museum Corporate Plan 1990-95, Transcript by the author. (NHM DF941/4 archival)

Very similar financial pressures were to be found in other UK national cultural institutions at the time, as we have already seen in the British Museum example (see Chapter 6, page 227). However, as well as the obvious similarities across different institutions, each institutional situation includes many differences, reflecting their very specific circumstances and pressures, as well as quite different ways in which these situations were addressed. In the case of the British Museum, we have seen how the British Museum’s financial difficulties were made
worse, at least in the short term, by a series of management and financial issues related to the Great Court scheme (see Chapter 6, page 240). In the case of the British Library, we have seen how the issues arising from the changes in scientific publishing have been eroding the organisational ability to adapt its business models and invest in new types of infrastructure which would enable it to stay a leading provider of scientific information (see Chapter 7, page 288). In the case of the Natural History Museum, one of the distinguishing features of the Museum’s situation, leading to the crisis and the need for change, went beyond the most immediate financial issues and was related to the rapid scientific advances at the end of the 20th century. This especially meant scientific changes in the fields of taxonomy and systematic biology (Gee 1992; Agnarsson & Kunter 2007), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

8.2.3 Modernisation of research as a part of transformation agenda

From the very beginning of the Natural History Museum crisis Chalmers stated that his aim was to retain the Museum’s research focus, but without spreading the Museum’s resources too thinly. He also claimed that his plans for greater commercial income and financial self-reliance are in line with other leading institutions such as the Smithsonian Institutions in the United States, and that the planned new short-term fellowships are necessary to bring in ‘new blood’ and that the change is necessary to modernise and strengthen the institution and its research (Gee 1990a: 805; NHM DF933/83 archival). These views were reinforced by the Museum’s Chair Sir Walter Bodmer, who also publicly defended the Museum’s strategy and the trustees’ responsibility to ensure that the Museum should live within its means, while considering the complex issues and need for changes – from reviving the Museum’s buildings to improving its exhibitions and better focusing the Museum’s research efforts. He even defended the need to learn from Disneyland in order to attract new audiences and move with the times, so the Museum does not turn ‘into a dinosaur like the ones it so successfully exhibits’ (Bodmer 1990: 569).

Bodmer was equally firm in emphasising that the Museum’s scientific priorities need to take account of the Museum’s strengths as determined by the external peer review, ensure that many old tenured posts are replaced by younger staff on shorter term contracts, and undertake more focused research -
It would be impossible to carry out effective research on all the groups of organisms in the museum’s collections even if our resources for research were doubled or trebled. (Bodmer 1990: 570)

The use of this pivotal moment to affect broader scientific transformation, including replacing a proportion of older curatorial body and changing the established curatorial practice, was in some ways similar to what we have seen at the British Museum (See Chapter 6, page 227). However, one big difference is that the British Museum’s change were conducted in an almost covert way, and the need to modernise research was not expressed as an explicit objective at the point of losing curatorial jobs even though the need to modernise was evident through the work of the Scholarship Committee (see page 220). The need to upgrade curatorial expertise is mentioned only in a very oblique way at the British Museum, but we have seen that the succession of the British Museum’s directors desired such change at the time, including Pope-Hennessey and David Wilson (Pope-Hennessey 1991: 216-7; Wilson 2002: 297, BM Trustees 30 October 1999). This indicates that the differences between the institutions are maybe less than it appeared at the time, or what they are perceived to be today (Interview G2.01). The difference is maybe more in their institutional culture and the way in which they communicate these changes, rather than in the underlying motivation to modernise their research functions and the eventual end results that included moving towards more short-term, project-based research, which has taken place in all three institutions selected for the case studies (Interviews G1.01; G1.05; G1.06; G2.01).

Despite the opposition and the heated discussions, the Natural History Museum managed to implement the majority of the proposed changes (Nature 1998; Interview G2.02). And it seems that the changes paid off, because at the end of the decade we see public acknowledgements of success despite the previous criticism, earning Neil Chalmers a positive editorial in the previously critical Nature (Nature 1998). Even David Attenborough changed his mind. While still remembering his disagreements with Chalmers, especially in regard to the introduction of entrance fees, in his statement to the Guardian in 2004 for an article celebrating Chalmer’s time at the Museum prior to his retirement, Attenborough said –
The NHM is doing very well, now, isn't it? It has made a lot of money, it has built a lot of stuff, it has opened doors, it has changed its policy, so good for Neil. (Radford 2004)

The same article sums his time at the Museum as follows –

In less than 16 years, he has turned a troubled temple of taxonomy into a showcase with the turnover of a top Premiership football club, while keeping it going as a research institution to match the great Universities. (Radford 2004)

However, not all evaluations of Chalmer’s leadership and impact on the Natural History Museum are positive. Naggs (2022) describes the effect of the 1990s events as follows –

Power struggles ensued between Sir Neil Chalmers, the last career scientist to have been appointed as Director (from 1988 until 2004), and the Trustees, and between the demands of public engagement and of science. Sweeping changes and loss of specialist staff initiated by Neil Chalmers, who had no background in collections-based institutions, were continued under the next director. This included the expulsion of the career based scientific leadership, the establishment of a clique of empowered administrators, and the loss of cohesion between science and exhibitions. These remain largely untold stories. (Naggs 2022: 95)

Another area, where the Natural History Museum, following its reorganisation in the early 1990s, significantly differs from British Museum and British Library, is in implementing the change in relation to its curatorial and scientific staff, which created two different pools of staff – curators and scientists – two groups that are meant to have different organisational function and duties (Interviews G1.02; G2.02). This difference has been already discussed in Chapter 4 (see page 111). In addition to the distinct curatorial and scientific roles, the Natural History Museum continues to maintain a separation between research roles, either curatorial or scientific, and its public engagement and interpretation roles (Interviews G1.02, G2.02). The issue emerging, however, is if the Natural History Museum is experiencing the loss of expertise in the broad groups of organisms, due to its move away from collection-based research (Naggs 2022: 100). This chapter will further look in the issue of curatorial research
today. In the 1990s context, however, we can note that, at least publicly, the Museum showed high level of concern related to the fast advances in its scientific fields, especially taxonomy. Bodmer wrote at the time -

*There are new scientific challenges for the museum’s research that come from the revolution in our understanding of the genetic material and our ability to manipulate it. Some of the collections can now provide a source of the ultimate information on which taxonomy must be based, namely the DNA sequence itself. Neither can the revolution in information technology be ignored by the museum.* (Bodmer 1990: 569-570)

This brings us to the issue of ‘unsexy’ taxonomy and the Natural History Museum attempt to take a new scientific direction. To understand the issues arising in taxonomy and systematic biology and how this affects the Museum, this chapter will look at the issues first from the governmental and policy point of view, and then from scientific point of view.
8.3 Parliamentary inquiries into decline of taxonomy and systematic biology research 1992-2008

8.3.1 Purpose of the Parliamentary Inquiries in taxonomy and systematic biology 1992-2008

Considering the frequent references in scientific literature and press regarding the unglamorous nature of taxonomy (Gee 1990b; Vernon 1993; Agnarsson & Kutner 2007; Wheeler 2014), it is somewhat surprising to find that the UK government has conducted no less than three lengthy Parliamentary Inquiries on this subject through the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee between 1992 and 2008. The aim of all three Inquiries was to stem the decline of taxonomy.

It is important to note that this was not the only period in the second part of the 20th century when we can see the link between the national conversations about the discipline of taxonomy and the Museum’s future direction. Stearn (1981) tells us about two taxonomy reports delivered in the 1970s – NERC’s report The Role of Taxonomy in Ecological Research (NERC 1976) and the report of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils Review Group Taxonomy in Britain (1979), which were to ‘determine and evaluate the needs and priorities for taxonomic research and where additional funds might be used to best effect’ (Stearn 1981: 363), recommending that –

... the British Museum (Natural History), the Royal Botanic Gardens and other institutions which maintain the national collections of non-living reference specimens make the curation of these collections and their development for education and research the central purpose of their programmes. (Stearn 1981: 363)

Stearn (1981) tells us that the Museum took steps to establish a long-standing dialogue with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew regarding their respective areas of botanical responsibility, and similarly in relation to geology with the Institute of Geological Sciences. According to Stearn, the Museum also continued to strengthen the liaison with universities, Research Councils, and the Royal Society, as well as to increase a number of visiting research students at the Museum. However, Stearn also feels that the Museum was not able to respond
to these reports in full, being obliged at the time to reduce curatorial staffing by fourteen posts and reduce funds for technical equipment and travel, as well as having to rely on the help of volunteer taxonomists, both professional and amateur (Stearn 1981: 363-4). Despite this, Stearn feels that in the 1960s and the 1970s the Natural History Museum emerged from the British Museum ‘as a separate modern well-equipped and outward-looking institution’, collaborating with scientific institutions at home and abroad ‘at a time when the fundamental importance of taxonomy was gaining renewed recognition’ (Stearn 1981: 364). As we will see later, these changes were taking place because of scientific advances in evolutionary systematics and molecular biology.

The 1992 Parliamentary Inquiry in taxonomy and systematic biology in the UK was conducted by Lord Dainton, whom we have already met through his seminal role in the formation of the British Library (see Chapter 7, page 262). This Inquiry recommended, among other things, that the level of grant-in-aid for key institutions should be protected to ensure that the UK collections are well maintained (House of Lords 2002: paragraph 2.9). This recommendation, as we will see in more detail later, was not implemented. Lord Dainton’s Inquiry also led to ‘several short-term measures to stimulate systematic biology’, such as the Taxonomy Initiative (1994-1998) funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Wellcome Trust’s Biodiversity Initiative (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 1.4).

The second Inquiry, chaired by Baroness Walmsley, reported in 2002, and its purpose is described as follows -

*The purpose of the inquiry was (a) to establish whether systematic biology in the UK was in decline and if so why, (b) to clarify whether it mattered if systematic biology were in decline and, in particular, what impact a decline would have on biodiversity conservation, and (c) to identify what action, if any, was required.*

*(House of Lords 2002: paragraph 2.11)*

The implementation of the recommendations of the second Inquiry was also patchy, especially when it comes to achieving better coordination of taxonomic activity. But this Inquiry did lead to awarding of the ‘academic analogue status’, a version of today’s IRO status, to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Royal Botanic Garden Kew. In addition, an annual systematics
debate series was inaugurated by the Linnean Society. Also, Linnean Society together with the Systematics Association and BBSRC, launched a new funding scheme – Collaborative Scheme for Systematics Research (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 1.6). However, regarding other key recommendations of the second Inquiry, HEFCE did not explore, as recommended, that they should support systematic biology in line with other minority disciplines, and Defra did not establish a co-ordinating body for systematic biology, as it was also recommended (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 1.7).

It is not surprising, therefore, that in 2008 we had yet another Parliamentary Inquiry, this time linked to the government’s ‘new focus on environmental sustainability and increasing awareness of the impact of climate change on biodiversity’. This Inquiry was tasked with finding out -

(a) whether systematic biology in the UK is in a fit state to generate the essential taxonomic information required by the emergence of the concept of ecosystem services, and

(b) whether the UK has the skills available to be able to understand and predict the impact of climate change on biodiversity, whilst continuing to meet the ongoing needs of biodiversity conservation and also the broader needs of taxonomy as a discipline which underpins all aspects of biology. (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 1.8)

… In considering these questions, we have borne in mind the historical importance of the UK within the global taxonomic community as a result of the collections held in the UK (for example, The Natural History Museum (NHM), RBG Kew, RGB Edinburgh and the Zoological Society of London).

(House of Lords 2008: paragraph 1.8)

While the historical importance of the UK collections was a key consideration, all three Inquiries were concerned with disciplinary issues that are broader than the national collections context.
It is significant that the Parliamentary Inquiries on taxonomy and systematic biology were taking place at the time of the financial crisis and reorganisation at the Natural History Museum in the 1990s. The evidence gathered for the Inquiries can help us to understand funding and policy landscape that was underpinning the Museum’s scientific work.

Boxshall (2011: 4) tells us that -

*The three largest taxonomic institutions are the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. Together with the other National Museums, these institutions represent core national capability in taxonomy and systematics.*

Dainton’s Inquiry established that there was a funding reduction of 28 per cent for systematic biological research across the whole field, as well as a reduction in time spend teaching systematic biology in universities, leading to an aging profile of experts in the discipline. The Inquiry also considered how ‘the great collections which are so vital to progress’ ... ‘have not been maintained and exploited to the extent that the times require’ (House of Lords 1992: 1297-8). The Inquiry also pointed out a significant fragmentation in terms of the government’s remits and funding sources, another theme that we have seen in our previous case studies (House of Lords 1992). Dainton explained the issue of fragmentation as follows -

*Thus, because there are many funding bodies in the field, including several research councils and government departments, it seems to be no one’s business to make a regular appraisal of a subject which can so easily fall between the cracks of so many organisations. Moreover, the Department of National Heritage (formerly the Office of Arts and Libraries) has by its own admission no capability for assessing the need or the capacity of its sole institutional pensioner in the field, the Natural History Museum, for work in that field because the main business of the Department of National Heritage lies elsewhere in funding national museums, mainly in the arts and humanities, libraries and galleries.*
Other quasi-structural causes simply reflect the way in which universities are allocated money from the public purse and then distribute internally their own core funds to activities, taking every care to reflect the way in which those activities can earn external funds from grant and contract- awarding bodies. Systematic biology research is at risk because it is intrinsically a relatively rather cheap subject and does not need much external funding. Therefore, it tends to be accorded a rather low priority with universities in securing support from a university’s core funding. (House of Lords 1992: 1298)

Dainton (House of Lords 1992) thus sheds light on some of the issues regarding funding situation, and we can see how this connects to the Natural History Museum crisis taking place in the early 1990s, leading to the loss of jobs and resulting in the tensions regarding the Museum’s strategy. Dainton also points out that both OAL and DNH did not have a capability to deal with these issues, which, as we have seen, were also the issues raised by press and critics of the Museum’s new direction at the time (Gee 1990a: 805; Nature 1990b: 397). Dainton’s description of the Natural History Museum as a ‘sole institutional pensioner in the field’ is a telling phrase (House of Lords 1992: 1298), and certainly one that does not imply a vibrant scientific institution, but rather an institution whose best days are in the past.

In view of these findings, Dainton’s recommendation of how to remedy this situation sounds underwhelming, as he recommended that the maintenance of the collections at ‘our great systematics institutions like Kew and the Natural History Museum’ should be maintained at current levels in real terms, while DNH should set up a rolling programme of £0.5 million a year to assist those collections with research outside grant-in-aid, while also recommending strengthening of funding routes to universities and NERC (House of Lords 1992: 1299). However, even these modest recommendations were not implemented, meaning that by the time we come to the second Inquiry in 2002, a decade later, the situation has become more alarming.
With no discernible improvement in a ten-year period since the Dainton Inquiry in 1992, the concerns regarding systematic biology have come on the agenda of the Select Committee on Science and Technology again. The new Inquiry was led by Baroness Walmsley, who explained the situation as follows -

In the end we came to the conclusion that the threats to the science of systematic biology in this country are still severe. We concluded that it does matter, more so today than ever before, because of the greater and more pressing threats to the biodiversity of the earth.

… grant in aid from successive governments to the major UK systematic biology institutions has declined in real terms over the past 10 years by between 15 and 27 per cent in real terms. That is putting the quality of curation of this priceless heritage and invaluable scientific resource at risk. It is also limiting the ability of these great institutions to respond to the challenges and opportunities that modern technology brings for them to share, via the Internet, their unique collections with the rest of the world, in particular those countries that are cash poor and biodiversity rich. (House of Lords 2002a: 918)

The situation in universities was also judged as alarming. The Research Assessment Exercise was singled out as one of the key problems –

This is at least in part a consequence of the Funding Councils' policies and the emphasis placed by the RAE on recently cited publications. Systematic biology publications often do not have as immediate an impact as publications in other areas of science, yet are quite regularly referred to over a long period of time, sometimes exceeding a century. (House of Lords 2002a: paragraph 5.9)

The second Inquiry recommended that Defra should set up a body that would bring together representatives from different government departments, ecologists, conservationists, and systematic biology community (House of Lords 2002a: paragraph 5.22). Just like the first report, the second report pointed out the need to overcome the fragmentation and lack of coordination arising due to
the involvements of many different organisations and different parts of government. This recommendation was to ensure that Defra provides leadership, which was vital to establish more coordination between different parties involved. The second report contains a record from the seminar held at the Natural History Museum, which sums up the issue of fragmentation as follows -

*The current situation with funding from very diverse sources (DEFRA, DCMS, Scottish Executive, Research Councils, Wellcome Trust) was confusing. It was not clear who had overall responsibility for making sure that UK systematics was in a good position, either to meet the UK's biodiversity commitments or for any other purpose. (House of Lords 2002a: Appendix 5)*

This kind of fragmentation across the government and other relevant bodies resulted in the lack of leadership, the absence of coordination in setting future policies, funding and ensuring that the benefits achieved are greater than the sum of its parts.

8.3.4 2008 Select Committee on Science and Technology Inquiry on Taxonomy and Systematic Biology Research

Looking into the third Parliamentary Inquiry in 2008, the crisis in taxonomy and systematic biology continued to grow without any resolution in sight. The policy rationale for the importance of taxonomy and systematic biology became even stronger as the biodiversity policies have become a higher priority for the government, especially in terms of the new international commitments related to biodiversity related to habitats, water, trade in endangered species, and marine environment (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 2.2). Further policy areas that were noted as requiring taxonomic expertise, included protection against invasive alien species, response to climate change, policing trade in endangered species, promoting public engagement with environmental issues, and identification of emerging diseases and disease surveillance (House of Lords 2008: paragraphs 2.4 - 2.11). However, despite the clear policy need, the state of the discipline was described in very negative terms. The comments from the Inquiry’s evidence included the following -
(i) "declining population of professional systematists", [traditional systematics in the UK] is "dwindling in relation to the needs of its users" (JNCC p 147)

(ii) "whole set of skills and expertise to maintain the international standards for identification is disappearing rapidly from the UK" (Research Councils UK p. 39)

(iii) "there is a lack of taxonomical expertise that is accessible to government, conservationists and education establishments" (Plantlife International p. 289)

(iv) "Ecological consultants … are really struggling for properly qualified people with taxonomic identification skills" (Professor Richard Gornall, President of the BSBI) (Q 175)

(v) "[A 2002 study of UK insect taxonomists] … shows a clear decline in numbers of both amateur and professional taxonomists, and our own difficulties … confirm that the decline is continuing" (Royal Entomological Society p. 294)

(vi) "the number of active prokaryotic taxonomists in UK institutions is declining" (Society for General Microbiology p. 305)

(vii) "Numbers … [of algal taxonomists] … have declined markedly over the last 20 years" (British Phycological Society p. 218)

(House of Lords 2008: paragraph 3.4)

Considering the attempts made by the previous Inquiries to bring together different parties involved in the government and the broader sector, the findings of the 2008 report are particularly troubling. The report commented on ‘the astonishing lack of awareness in Government, both of the importance of systematic biology and the current state of decline in areas of systematic biology’ (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 6.1).

Defra’s Director of Science, Dr Miles Parker, described Defra as ‘a user of the outputs of systematics and taxonomy’, but ‘not a major utiliser of research from these disciplines’, a truly astonishing statement from the government department that was charged by the previous Inquiry to bring together national effort in this field and help identify priority areas (House of Lords 2002a:
paragraph 5.22). The 2008 report states that ‘No such body was established. (House of Lords 2008: paragraph 6.2), and concludes –

*This lack of awareness on behalf of Defra creates risk on a number of fronts: users risk not having their needs met; producers risk becoming disconnected from their users; researchers risk having to limit the questions they can address through lack of essential tools; and Government risks being unable to deliver policy.*

*(House of Lords 2008: paragraph 6.5)*

NERC, the most relevant research funder that played a significant part in all three Inquiries, stated that it is ‘not primarily concerned with systematics and taxonomy per se, focusing instead on using the information’, while BBSRC stated that it ‘has little involvement in the support of taxonomy (House of Lords 2008: paragraphs 6.6), leading to the conclusion that –

*… the lack of awareness, at RCUK-level, of the state of the UK systematic biology to be very worrying. (House of Lords 2008: paragraphs 6.8)*

Equally, the role of HEFCE and RAE, also previously raised as an issue, remained unsolved. Ian Pearson MP, Minister for Science and Innovation at DIUS, in the evidence provided for the third Inquiry, did not accept that the RAE played a role in the decline of minority disciplines and stated that there is not conclusive evidence to that effect (House of Lords 2008: paragraphs 6.10 – 6.12). However, on the basis of the evidence from the Biosciences Federation, Natural History Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the report concluded that there was a widespread view that the RAE criteria did not favour systematics, therefore, recommending, just like the previous report, that –

*HEFCE should take into consideration the way that citation-based metrics disadvantage systematic biology and also the bias that would be introduced if grants-based metrics were employed. (House of Lords 2008: paragraphs 6.14)*

Finally, we have DCMS in its key role as sponsor and funder of the Natural History Museum and other relevant museums. Margaret Hodge, who was Minister at DCMS at the time, informed the Inquiry that ‘problems with the health of the discipline or with co-ordination between Government has never been
raised as an issue with her’ (House of Lords 2008: paragraphs 6.17). At this point we should consider that Labour was in power for over ten years, and that one of Margaret Hodge’s ministerial predecessors, Tessa Blackstone, was a Minister during the second Inquiry in 2002, meaning that this issue must have been known to DCMS previously, if not to Margaret Hodge personally. Tessa Blackstone even participated in the House of Lords discussion about the first Dainton report, while Labour was still in opposition, where she stressed her credentials as a trustee of the National History Museum and the Master of Birkbeck College, stating that –

… research in this field must be supported largely by public funds. It is fundamental research which, although it has many spin-offs for other branches of science, is unlikely to attract a great deal of private-sector support. (House of Lords 1992: 1331)

… the major collections at our national institutions have suffered from declining funding in real terms. That has undoubtedly affected the curation work of the museums as well as damaging their research output. The Government’s agreement to accept the Select Committee’s recommendations would go a long way towards rescuing this important field of research from what otherwise appears bound to be a continuing decline leaving systematists on the brink of extinction. (House of Lords 1992: 1332)

While the Labour government did increase the institutional grant-in-aid, this did not represent an increase in real terms, with inflation running ahead of increases (House of Commons 2003: paragraphs 25-30). We have also seen these issues reflected in the Natural History Museums Corporate Plan 1990-95 (NHM DF941/4 archival). In addition, the New Labour government imposed the new targets for widening participation and economic growth outcomes as a return for the increased funding. The conditions and targets included the maintenance of free entry, but also other targets related to participation, visitor numbers and regional collaborations. According to both the Natural History Museum and the British Museum, while they saw the issue of free admission in very different ways, they were united in their complaint against the additional burden of governmental targets (House of Commons 2003). Another Parliamentary Inquiry by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on funding and free admission at the national museums and galleries in 2003 described the formal nature of these additional
requirements as follows -

_Further discussion revealed some additional elements to the annual process which included an annual, backward-looking, meeting with officials to discuss performance against targets and, this year, a meeting for all DCMS sponsored bodies where ministers set out the Department’s priorities which were: “children, communities, economy and delivery”._

(House of Commons 2003: paragraph 35)

Neil Chalmers explained the process as follows -

_We have an annual meeting with officials, who go through our funding agreement and they compare what we said we would do in terms of targets with what we have actually achieved, and we do not know how the outcome of that meeting is then fed into the funding allocation that is made._ (House of Commons 2003: Evidence, paragraph 71)

In this situation DCMS impacted institutions through the way in which it administered funding and set its priorities, as well as through being ignorant of institutional performance and capacity in this key area of their activity. But before laying most of the blame onto DCMS, we must point out that the majority of the recommendations of the third Inquiry were directed towards the UK research policy and funding bodies – DIUS, UK Research Councils, NERC, and HEFCE.

Following the previously failed recommendation that Defra should coordinate UK taxonomy research, the third report recommended that DIUS should take a lead role as the lead government department for taxonomy and systematic biology. Further extensive recommendations were made aiming to improve funding for taxonomy and systematic biology, especially via NERC, as well as to remove the issues stemming from the RAE. (House of Lords 2008).
8.3.5 2009 postscript

The government’s response to the third Inquiry was published in 2009, coordinated by DIUS on behalf of Defra, DCMS, NHM, DCSF, DfID, NERC, BBSRC and Research Councils UK. In this report we see that only minor recommendations from the Inquiry were accepted, such as NERC producing a new study on the subject, National Biodiversity Network facilitating dialogue between different organisations involved with taxonomy, and Natural History Museum deploying more strategic approach to digitisation and encouraging young people towards scientific careers in general.

The more structural and demanding recommendations were all rejected – from NERC defending its existing funding approaches, HEFCE rejecting that RAE is to blame, and even a volunteering issues seen as something that is already fully addressed through the government’s renewed commitment to the third sector (House of Lords 2009: Appendix 1). Most significantly DIUS refused to act as coordinating government department, stating that –

*The Government does not accept this recommendation. It is not uncommon for different aspects of a scientific field to be spread across more than one Department as in the case of systematics and taxonomy which is the responsibility of Defra, DIUS and DCMS. Indeed, a discipline may benefit from its interaction with a number of departments, all of which have an interest in its activities. The Government considers rather that it is through effective coordination among Departments that the discipline is best supported. There are dozens of individual academic areas, and it would be a major change in existing practice for the Government to identify a lead Department in relation to each one.*

(House of Lords 2009: Appendix 1, paragraph 6.20)

It seems that the entire process came to an end without a successful solution. The Natural History Museum seemed to have been very realistic about any real prospects of additional funding and support all along, and moved to adjust its scientific strategies accordingly, and which we will discuss in more detail later. However, another UK national cultural organisation, The Royal Botanic Garden Kew, experienced a significant crisis, as explored in the next section.
All three Inquiries on taxonomy and systematic biology, with their work spanning over almost two decades, were clear in their view that the governmental fragmentation was damaging for the discipline (House of Lords 1992, 2002a, 2008). In 2010 everything became even more difficult with the Cameron/Clegg Coalition Government and the start of the UK austerity years, which made life difficult for the whole of public sector, including this supposedly unglamorous research area, split between different government departments, now each fighting to preserve its core budgets (Interviews G4.01, G4.02).

For taxonomy, possibly the most dramatic austerity moment came in 2015, when ‘The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew announced that financial problems would result in them having to implement a programme to make over one hundred people redundant, almost fifty of which are scientists’ (House of Commons 2015: 3). While the roots of this crisis were complex, and were mostly attributed to the way in which Defra funded Kew as one of its NDPBs (House of Commons 2015: 10-11), the situation again raised the issue of research funding for taxonomy -

*We have seen that austerity in Government has posed more risk to fundamental long term research than other types of research which are better able to compete for research council funding. The Government needs to protect this kind of world class research in the UK and ensure it receives proper recognition within Research Excellence Framework assessments. (House of Commons 2015: 7)*

John Wood, a senior research associate in Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Oxford, stated that -

*Kew cannot and should not compete for short-term grant money with a view to producing high impact academic publications. Instead, it should provide taxonomic services of the highest international quality to catalogue the world’s plant diversity and support other areas of biodiversity and ecological research. (House of Commons 2015: 7)*

This report describes the situation and funding at the Natural History Museum as more stable and flexible, with one of the recommendations for the Kew being that it should develop new approaches similar to those of the Natural
History Museum (House of Commons 2015: 12). Considering this view, it is interesting to look at the Natural History Museum’s evidence submitted to the previous governmental Inquiries, and which is striking both for its absence of demands for more money for taxonomy and in their acknowledgement of the change in relation to taxonomy within the institution. In 2008, the Natural History Museum’s evidence stated that –

The NHM has received good support from DCMS in recent years - the science group receives a relatively constant proportion of the budget and maintains a constant number of science staff. There has been very substantial capital investment in collections facilities over the past ten years. However, as the science undertaken by the Museum becomes more diverse, a smaller proportion of the resource is expended on descriptive taxonomy. This is a difficult but deliberate decision. (House of Lords 2008: Minutes of Evidence, NHM, paragraph 9)

This direction of travel, as we have seen, started taking shape in the early 1990s, when the Museum’s decisions were deemed to be controversial (NHM DF 941/4 archival; Bodmer 1990; Gee 1990a). The Museum’s submission referred to different aspects of taxonomic research, explaining that it is descriptive taxonomy which was of particular concern because it did not fit easily into policy definitions of hypothesis-driven research, while other areas, such as phylogenetic systematics, continued to flourish. They also made a range of proposals for upgrades in facilities for DNA sequencing, biodiversity informatics, digitisation of data, and storage of frozen samples (House of Lords 2008, Minutes of Evidence NHM). The Museum’s argument was not simply for supporting taxonomy, but for ensuring that it is seen in relation to other research priorities, and in particular challenges for biodiversity conservation and responses to climate change. These views informed how the Natural History Museum defined their own research approach and the role of taxonomy within it –

NHM research explores natural diversity; what organisms exist and how they interact; where they are; and how diversity changes and develops. This work integrates taxonomy with other areas of research. Our research framework summarises the wider scientific questions to which taxonomy contributes in the Museum or through collaboration. (House of Lords 2008: Minutes of Evidence, NHM, paragraph 22)
However, this official view from the Natural History Museum did not reflect a broader range of opinions held at the Museum, or across the scientific community (Thomson et. al. 2018; Britz et. al. 2020; Naggs 2022). Naggs (2022) writes about the decline of taxonomy and systematics at the Natural History Museum, claiming that the Museum’s greatest challenge is ‘to restore its authority and expertise in taxonomy and systematics and provide adequate staff levels to manage and develop its collections’ (Naggs 2022: 95). This includes the view that the government handling of taxonomy and systematics during the three Parliamentary Inquiries has led to the demise of taxonomy and systematics at the Natural History Museum (Naggs 2022: 101).

The Natural History Museum’s official approach to taxonomy and systematics was very different from the view expressed by the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew during the Inquiries, and which attributed the difficult taxonomic situation predominantly to the lack of funding available to the major institutions, while, at the same time, seeing taxonomy as a central rather than a contributing activity, stating that -

*Taxonomy on a scale commensurate with today’s needs should be a "megascience", but taxonomy and systematics have continued to be funded as if they are a marginal activity, instead of being viewed as central to meeting the crises of climate change and past ecosystem abuse. (House of Lords 2008: Minutes of Evidence, RBGK)*

Significantly, this position changed in the Kew’s Science Strategy published in 2015, which placed taxonomy not as an end it itself, but as an enabler of a bigger vision of ‘bringing authoritative expertise to bear on the critical challenges facing humanity today’ (Kew Gardens 2015: 6). This indicates that they did eventually follow the example of the Natural History Museum by repositioning their research in terms of the Grand Challenges rather than their core taxonomic expertise. Significantly, Neil Chalmers, no longer at the Natural History Museum, was involved in advising the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew at the time (Defra 2010: 1; 2012: 4). This increases Chalmers’ role in shaping the future of research functions at the Natural History Museum, but also at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, and in relation to the future of taxonomy and systematic biology.

The situation at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in 2015 tells us about the
overall lack of success of the three Parliamentary Inquiries into taxonomy and systematic biology. It is more difficult to make a judgement on the effect on the Natural History Museum. On one level, three Inquiries indicate that the Museum changing its view of taxonomy and systematic biology was inevitable considering the mixed messages and lack of action coming from the government and its arms-length bodies. They understood these changes early and made pragmatic changes to their strategies and ways of working. At the same time, we cannot understand all aspects of these changes only by considering a policy debate. This is why this case study also looks at the scientific issues arising in this field and how this might have informed the changes made by the Natural History Museum.
8.4 Impact of scientific advances on natural history museums

8.4.1 Naming and ordering natural world

Image 22 - Pisum sativum or garden pea. From *Thirty-eight plates, with explanations*, intended to illustrate Linnaeus’s System of vegetables, Thomas Martin 1799. ©University of Toronto, via Biodiversity Heritage Library, Public Domain

So far, we have looked at the issues of changes in research functions at the Natural History Museum through the lens of organisational change and government policy. This section investigates how scientific advances have influenced the development of natural history museums and, ultimately, how the scientific changes of the 20th century necessitated a transformation of science in natural history museums, including the Natural History Museum.

Taxonomy, the science concerned with the classification of living organisms, is in its origins inextricably linked with the history and evolution of museum cabinets. Asma (2001) takes us back to the late 18th and early 19th century cabinets of Hunter in London and Cuvier in Paris, showing their displays as a way to visualise new scientific ideas through their collections, moving away from the previous organisational principles of cabinets of curiosities based on aesthetics and theology, instead starting to show ‘the rationality and orderliness
beneath the profusion and confusion of forms’ (Asma 2001: 78), where ‘the organization of specimens became preparatory work for further scientific inquiry’ (Asma 2001: 113).

The search for the new taxonomic order culminates in the work of Carl Linnaeus, who gave us the new binomial system for naming taxa and an improved set of rules for identifying organisms. Linnean taxonomy combined later with Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution through natural selection, established a new definition of natural history museum and its key purposes in the 19th and 20th centuries – to name and order natural world, and to show how the world’s diversity came to be (Asma 2001; Curry et. al. 2018).

However, the order of the natural world and its scientific systems did not show a great deal of stability over time, with scientific theories constantly changing as human knowledge of natural world advances. Buffon, one of the most important 18th century naturalists, criticised subjectiveness and anthropocentricism of Linneaus’ taxonomy from the very start, especially the way in which, as he perceived it, the Linneaus’ system was very quickly deified and worshiped as an autonomous thing, even when leading to a seemingly incongruous groupings of organisms (Asma 2001: 124). Ever since, the issue of classification of living organisms was debated by scientists, necessitating for the system to be constantly revised – for example, to enable taxonomy to accommodate fossils of extinct animals and plants alongside living organisms. Carl Woese’s research on Archaea, a microorganism that was originally classified as bacteria, showed it to have unique characteristics which separated it from bacteria, controversially pointing towards three, rather than previous two ‘basic types’ of life (Agar 2012: 449-450). These examples indicate that the classification of living organisms continues to change as new methods and technologies are increasing our knowledge.

8.4.2 20th century crisis and reinvention in taxonomy

By the 20th century the fortunes of taxonomy seem to be in decline. We find it being categorised as ‘a vestige of a former time’ and viewed ‘as old-fashioned, out-of-date and even unscientific’, thus being increasingly overlooked ‘in favour of more experimental laboratory-based pursuits’, eventually leading to
the attempts in the 1940s and the 1950s to create a new approach to taxonomy, which would incorporate evolutionary science, thus leading to development of the Evolutionary Systematics (Vernon 1993: 208).

However, rather than a single way forward, the new discipline branched into two different and increasingly opposed evolutionary approaches – pheneticists adopted a positivist attitude, focusing on measurements in order to place organisms with the most overall similarities in the same taxa, while cladistics focused on how organisms descended from a common ancestor, using the idea of primitive and derived structures to show the evolutionary relationships of taxa (Asma 2001: 180–182; Agar 2012: 448). Asma uses the example of the American Museum on Natural History to show how cladistic method underpins the organisation of its galleries with its displays set out as a trunk of the evolutionary tree, with the branches diverging to show us different taxa (Asma 2001: 183). In the case of the Natural History Museum, Asma shows how its displays were shaped by Darwin’s ideas of natural selection, with an ‘unquestionable focus’ on ‘how the environment eliminates some variations and
perpetuates other minute variations until they constitute new populations’ (Asma: 2001: 195). This approach is contrasted with the Grande Galerie de l'évolution in Muséum national d'historie naturelle in Paris, which was organised around Lamarck’s first major law of transformation, presenting French version of evolution ‘as a process carried out by individual organisms – a process initiated within themselves and for themselves’ (Asma 2001: 196).

These examples show both close relationship between the dominating scientific theories and museum displays, as well as the link with the prevailing societal scientific canons, and, according to Asma, even some ‘juvenile national pride’ (Asma 2001: 195). The dominance of evolutionary approaches in taxonomy was not received well by all within traditional taxonomic community, with the tensions rising from the late 1950s (Vernon 1993: 224) –

One group believed evolutionary issues to be the most important concern of the taxonomist, which should be incorporated into the very construction of a classification; the other held that taxonomy and classification, although useful in illuminating evolutionary processes, were in fact quite separate from the study of evolution.

(Vernon 1993: 226)

An even greater change and upset for traditional taxonomy was the rise of molecular research, leading to many new developments and breakthroughs in systematic biology. Zuckerkandl & Pauling (1965) recognised that it is possible to study mutations that have accumulated in a specific protein sequence, meaning that molecules can serve as an evolutionary clock. This led to the new discoveries, such as Sarich & Wilson (1967) using it to estimate that humans, chimps, and gorillas shared a common ancestor as recently as 4 to 6 million years ago, which was much more recent date than classical palaeontologists believed up to this point (Gibbons 1991: 252). Sarich & Wilson (1967) work was based on the measurement of the degree of genetic relationship through the structure of proteins in particular human and chimpanzee serum albumin molecules, concluding that ‘the albumin data definitely favour those who have postulated that man and the African apes shared a common ancestor in the Pliocene’ (Sarich & Wilson 1967: 158).
The advances in computing and genetics opened up new directions of inquiry in systematic biology, especially through the new techniques such as DNA hybridisation, which involves heating the DNA of two species, separating them, and then re-fusing the strands in order to show how closely are two species related (Asma 2001: 1988-9). This technique led to new taxonomic findings, which were often challenging due to significant changes in relation to traditional taxonomic classifications. For example, Sibley et al. (1988) produced new classifications of birds using DNA-DNA hybridisation, their work significantly disrupting the longstanding classifications in ornithology. The new methods led to many eye-catching changes, albatrosses suddenly ending up with penguins, falcons with flamingos (Moss 2018: 291-3). Even the scientists involved with the new techniques recognised the rising complexities and that ‘it is apparent that the DNA-based phylogeny contains numerous dichotomies at many levels and that it would be impractical to assign a different categorical name to every branch node in the phylogeny’ (Sibley et al. 1988: 412). Combined with the increasing ease of automated data collection, the new techniques led to a significant increase in publication of new findings. Livezey (2011) points out how these new approaches have failed to create a link between molecular and phenotypic methods, thus ‘comprising multiple methods of poor familiarity and limited usage’, as well as engendering distrust of many novel findings in the phylogenetics of birds (Livezey
Livezey states that -

*Perhaps most disturbing is the proliferation of confidence in method and inference where there is an undeniable lack of empirical clarity, as if the competition of theory and evidence is at times supplanted by head counts and bravado.* (Livezey 2011: 125)

These issues affected the confidence in the new methods and the discipline (Moss 2018; Garnett & Christidis 2017). Garnett & Christidis (2017) claim that there are current and serious issues arising from, what they perceive as, arbitrary decision making and lack of coordination in global taxonomy, leading to the situation where –

‘Species’ are often created or dismissed arbitrarily, according to the individual taxonomist’s adherence to one of at least 30 definitions. Crucially, there is no global oversight of taxonomic decisions — researchers can ‘split or lump’ species with no consideration of the consequences. We contend that the scientific community’s failure to govern taxonomy threatens the effectiveness of global efforts to halt biodiversity loss, damages the credibility of science and is expensive to society. (Garnett & Christidis 2017: 25)

Garnett and Christidis (2017) claim that this situation has a direct influence on how international community and individual governments manage environmental legislation, provide funding for advancing conservation of different groups of organisms and coordinate worldwide efforts to safeguard biodiversity -

*Nationally, the splitting or lumping of species protected by law can affect investment and land use, and even foster doubts about science among the public and policy makers.* (Garnett & Christidis 2017: 26)

Garnett and Christidis (2017) propose that the solution could be found if the governance of taxonomy of complex organisms is to be brought under the Union of Biological Sciences (Garnett & Christidis 2017: 25). The view expressed by Garnett & Christidis (2017) was not received well by everyone, leading to a statement, co-authored by 184 taxonomists from a range of institutions worldwide (Thomson et al. 2018), rebutting the idea that the ambiguity and changes within taxonomy are detrimental for conservation, as well as disagreeing with the notion that there is a need to impose the new system of governing taxonomic decisions,
outside the already established processes of taxonomy (Thomson et al. 2018: 4-9). In their view, Garnett & Christidis (2017) article springs from their misunderstanding of the nature of taxonomy, arising due to the shift in research priorities –

_Garnett and Christidis’s proposal is far-reaching but represents a narrow perspective of taxonomy, as utilized by conservation, and reflects an increasingly broad misunderstanding throughout biology of the scientific basis of taxonomy, formalized nomenclature, and the relationship between them. This trend may have resulted from the attenuation of instruction in taxonomic principles and, in particular, nomenclature at many universities, in part because of a shift in research priorities away from taxonomy._ (Thomson et al. 2018: 4)

Thomson et al. (2018: 5) point out that the nature of taxonomy, which is defined as the science of recognising and delimiting species, is to discover new organisms and provide a constant re-evaluation of the boundaries between taxonomic entities. Rather than being a static catalogue that simply aids conservation, in their view, taxonomy should be described as a branch of science that underpins all biological research, reflecting ‘the scientific nature and progress of the discipline’ (Thomson et al. 2018: 5-6).

All these disciplinary developments were not apparent when looking into this issue from political and policy perspective earlier in this chapter, but they are also significant in relation to the ways in which research functions developed at the Natural History Museum. These scientific uncertainties, or even misunderstanding about the nature of taxonomy as a discipline, add to the persistent concerns about the state of taxonomy and its position as a science discipline, as well as its role within museums, as we have previously seen.
8.4.3 Museum collections as ‘genetic goldmines’

Another seminal advance in the field came with the application of polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which can amplify small amounts of DNA, and which led to discovery of many new species, especially in the most extreme environments (Agar 2012: 464). Gibbons (1991) quotes Terry Yates, who was at the time Director of the National Science Foundation systematic biology programme, saying that ‘PCR means all of a sudden that all these dead rats in museums are genetic goldmines’ (Gibbons 1991: 253).

As the threat to the planet’s biodiversity grows, the scientific breakthroughs in evolutionary biology and systematics meant that natural history collections were becoming more valued as the samples of biological past, enabling research into extinct species. Also, the considerable size and geographic breadth of collections was providing new ways to sample extant populations in the wild (Burrell et al. 2014: 35-6). For example, old seabird specimens were used to document a rise in mercury levels in the sea over time, or to demonstrate different levels of stress among extant avian populations due to changes in the environment (Winker 2004: 456). They were helping in studying genetic variations within populations in response to climate change, or in shedding light on insecticide and herbicide resistance, or seeing the effects of pathogens on different populations (Burrell et al. 2014: 35). Roy (1994: 551) provides four examples of studies where historic collections were used to study extant populations, including examples of northern hairy-nosed wombat, African wild dog, Ethiopian wolf, and red wolf, finding that museum-derived DNA can be used to study inaccessible populations to understand ‘both the loss of genetic variation and its distribution over space and time’.

These new research possibilities are influencing museum practice on multiple levels. Because working with the old specimens proved to be difficult and limited at times, in part due to DNA damage that occurred either as a result of natural post-mortem processes or the ways in which museum preservation methods fragmented and damaged DNA (Burrell et al. 2014: 35), we see multiple changes in the way how the new specimens are collected and deposited in museums. This includes museums increasingly trying to store small tissue or other samples, specifically for use in future genetic studies, including
cryopreservation in liquid nitrogen (Burrell et al. 2014: 42).

The new possibilities revived the idea of the importance of the original physical specimens and not just digitised collections. Winker (2004) points out that we need to better understand temporal changes in the use of collections and their long-term relevance, as well as the importance of objects themselves that cannot be divorced from the data derived through their digitisation, especially as the current state of digitisation means that, most likely, there will be future data requirements that we might wish to extract from original specimens (Winker 2004: 455-6). Winker contends that -

As a product of science, the useful life of these specimens is much longer than that of the scientific papers written about them. The temporal relevance of scientific publications is tracked using half-life statistics. Only about one-third of biological journals exceed half-lives of 10 years, meaning that in just a few decades most of the science published today will be largely irrelevant. Thus, the “freshness date” of specimen-based science quickly expires, while the relevance of the specimens themselves may grow appreciably. (Winker 2004: 456)

Consequently, Winker (2004: 458) argues for new business models for natural history collections, which would enable us to better combine ‘short-term scientific gains with long-term outlooks. In particular, Winker (2004) argues that short-term goals neglect collection growth as priority, using bird collections as an example. Winker (2004) claims that, because birds are a well-known group of
organisms, there is less emphasis on collecting bird specimens, meaning that the future collections, which will be needed to enable us to monitor change, will not be adequate and will not be a good representation of the present time (Winker 2004: 457). This means that it is not sufficient for museums just to re-evaluate the relevance of historic collections in relation to key scientific challenges, but they also need to continue collecting while utilising new scientific possibilities (Lermen et. al. 2009; Naggs 2022, Ebenezer et. al. 2022).

8.4.4 New infrastructure requirements

![Image 26 - X-Ray diffraction lab at the National History Museum, London, 2017. Author's own photo.](image)

The rapid scientific advances also meant that there were new requirements for the state-of-art scientific infrastructure within research active natural history museums, including new labs with DNA amplifiers and synthesizers, ultracentrifuges, as well as cutting-edge computing facilities. Scientific advances in other disciplines also meant the need for additional infrastructure, such as X-ray diffractors for metals and rocks, and new labs that could accommodate advances in microscopy, spectroscopy, and spectrometry, as well as digitisation and computing capabilities (Gibbons 1991; Wen et. al. 2015; Pavid 2018; Interview G1.02).
This was and remains a worldwide trend. For example, in 1987, ecologist Gary Graves was instrumental in persuading Smithsonian institution to set up a new 5,500 square foot lab for molecular research methods, with similar developments also taking place at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Field Museum in Chicago; and the natural history museums in Stockholm, Munich, and Madrid (Gibbons 1991: 251).

Some of these new high-tech shops are quite ambitious. The Smithsonian’s sprawling new support center on the outskirts of Washington, D.C., looks more like an electronic company than a museum. (Gibbons 1991: 251)

It is significant for this study that the big wave of the new lab building in museums across the world seems to start in a big way in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coinciding with the 1990s financial pressures that we are seeing in the UK museums at the time, adding to the new level of pressure on funding and an additional need for new skills. Terry Yates, Director of the National Science Foundation’s systematic biology programme in the US, told Gibbons – ‘It costs a lot more money to sequence genes than to measure skulls’ (Gibbons 1991: 252). And the issue was not only the rise in costs, but there was also frequent antagonism and resistance within museums towards this new, costly, and disruptive science that was taking away attention from the old ways of taxonomic research (Gibbons 1991: 252).

In relation to the Natural History Museum Gibbons tells us –

Across the Atlantic at the British Museum in London, population ecologist Richard Thomas is clearing blue whale bones out of a storage room in the basement of the museum to make room for a $500,000 molecular lab where there will be bench space for ten or so researchers. Already Thomas is producing his own DNA sequences from lizards for population studies and is hiring postdocs to work on the mitochondrial DNA of marine gastropods and protozoa. (Gibbons 1991: 251)

The new scientific techniques and advances require constant investment and development of new infrastructures. This means that we subsequently see a range of new developments such as the Natural History Museum’s new £1 million CryoArks Biobank initiated in 2018, envisaged as the first national bank of frozen
animal material, preserving DNA, tissues, and cells of endangered species (Pavid 2018).

With the expenses of the new infrastructure, storage and staffing arising from these scientific developments, it is not surprising that we are continuing to see further strategic and operational changes in the Natural History Museum’s scientific ambition. This is especially evident in the way in which the Museum’s strategy starts to be formulated to align to the concept of grand challenges (NHM 2019 & n.d.), which will be explore in the next section.
8.5 Embracing grand challenges

The concept of grand challenges first appeared in the US research system. Hicks (2016) attributes the concept of grand challenges to Kenneth G. Wilson, a Nobel Laureate physicist, who used it first to advocate for large-scale computing for theoretical physics in the 1980s, the term soon finding its way into the reports of the National Science Foundation, the US Department of Defense, and the Gates Foundation. Kalil (2012) described grand challenges in the context of Obama’s White House science policy as ‘having a major impact in domains such as health, energy, sustainability, education, economic opportunity, national security, or human exploration’, describing them as types of scientific activities that are ‘ambitious but achievable’, with measurable targets, focused on improving human condition, as well as being compelling (Kalil 2012).

Inevitably, the concept of grand challenges made its way to the UK, where it has been accepted and firmly established as a central feature of the UK science policy. For example, we can see it in the UK Industrial Strategy, which specifies four grand challenges of artificial intelligence and data, ageing society, clean growth, and future of mobility (BEIS 2021a). As a scientific policy concept grand challenges are often used by the UK government and funding bodies to define their funding priorities. In 2014, for example, in the UK science strategy Our plan for growth, the UK Government committed to investing £2.9 billion towards grand challenges (BIS 2014b: 3).

To work out how grand challenges could apply to natural history and taxonomy, we can start with Kalil (2012), who says –

*Studying the bioluminescence of jellyfish does not sound very practical, but it led to the discovery of green fluorescent protein, a key tool in biological imaging.* (Kalil 2012)

One outcome for the 2008 Inquiry in taxonomy and systematic biology was formation of the UK Taxonomy Co-ordination Committee. It was envisaged that the Committee would focus on a range of issues such as distribution of the UK taxonomic collections, digitisation, and training, as well as bringing together ‘the UK taxonomic community to list and prioritise time limited major research programmes or “grand challenges” that would advance UK taxonomy and systematics’ (NERC 2011 archival). These recommendations are echoed in the
Natural History Museum’s corporate documentation, especially its science strategies and reports, such as in the Museum’s science review for 2011-12 -

We have formed an alliance with other leading institutions in the field to develop a national strategy for taxonomy and systematics, as recommended by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee. Our foci in this UK strategy are the five priority areas identified by the funder community: the development of a series of grand challenges, distribution of UK natural history collections, collection digitisation, identification tools for UK organisms, and training. Of these we see the first – a prioritised list of time-limited grand challenges to advance UK taxonomy and systematics – as being key in building a progressive and compelling vision that will inspire both the community and its sponsors. (NHM 2013a: 4)

In the more recent version of the Natural History Museum’s strategy the grand challenges thinking has been condensed into the idea of ‘planetary emergency’, with the vision of the Museum’s science that is dedicated to ‘a future where both people and the planet thrive’ (NHM 2019: 4).

One of the interviewees for this study from the Natural History Museum explains the link between the Museum’s strategy and the grand challenges as follows –

We’ve experimented with different ways of delivering strategic capability. Sometimes that will be short term. You would say – well, okay, there’s a new question here. You can look at the government policy – so, what’s government worried about. Is it interested in climate change, or biodiversity? Or is it interested in sources of rare minerals? Is it interested in… there are all sorts of things you could identify. And is there a funding opportunity that goes with that? So, can our collection and our expertise be brought to bear on that issue which is of a key importance for society. (Interview G2:02)

Grand challenges concept also informs the Museum’s ambition to strengthen its research excellence and the delivery of world-leading science. The same interviewee also applied grand challenge thinking to the Museum’s digital research -
So, you can see… part of the challenge is - how do you do research with messy data. So, it isn't a perfect data set. It is something which happens to have been accumulated over 300 years. How do you work with that? How do you answer big questions? And so, part of the challenge is for them to say – I have a radical new way of dealing with this. I can look at insights in terms of bio-diversity change, or climate, or deep time. (Interview G2.02)

And the concept can go even further, so this interviewee explores how the entire collection can be seen as a giant science infrastructure, offering an opportunity to model the world in the quest of tackling grand challenges of our time.

But you can say – well, what is the collection? Is it simply a locked-up stuff? Or is it a set of ideas as well? Is it coherent? Does it have meaning in itself? So, coming back to my original point – the way you looked at the collection in the 17th Century would be quite different, and it depends on your perspective as well. But what we rely on those research scientists to do is not only to pull value out of the collection, but to push the value into the collection. So, their discoveries, their acquisitions, work in terms of annotation and data that go with it, actually change the meaning of the collection, so that it better represents the outside world. It represents reality. And so, you could say - as an infrastructure the collection is a model of reality. (Interview G2.02)

These examples indicate that the concept of big challenges has raised the Museum’s scientific ambitions, from introducing big societal and economic research questions, to the Museum’s focus on developing more ambitious scientific centres and improving its digital capabilities. It appears that a move away from the traditional, often taxonomy-based, understanding of museum science has been transformational in terms of its scientific capacity, relevance, and financial sustainability (NHM 2013b, 2019). However, the question remains if this vision can also accommodate the longer-term implications for the Museum’s collections and all its research functions, especially those still residing with the Museum’s curatorial staff and traditional taxonomic areas (Interview G1.04; Naggs 2022).

Controversially, Naggs (2022) challenges the Museum’s ‘planetary
emergency’ vision as ‘delusional’, saying that ‘the notion that human numbers and consumption can be sustained without obliterating the natural world is a collective fallacy’ (Naggs 2022: 86-7). His claim is that the Natural History Museum has lost its way, which is due to the move away from its core ‘collections-based mission’ -

‘This is an inevitable consequence of setting priorities driven by ease of funding and ticking all of the boxes in applied environmental, agricultural and medical research.’

… ‘Under the painfully unsuitable hegemony of DCMS, the largely inappropriate Trustees vested with considerable power, a director and executive depleted of scientific stature, authority and independence…’ (Naggs 2022: 104).

Naggs (2022) also argues that there are weaknesses in the Museum’s strategy in relation to contemporary collecting, loss of taxonomic expertise and international reach and focus (Naggs 2022). All of these issues are related to the need for a long-term view of research and science, which is typically a key characteristic of research function in the UK national cultural organisations. However, this study shows a very marked move towards short-term research timelines and policies such as grand challenges that, however critical for our society, are focused on specific present issues. The next section explores the relationship between more traditional curatorial research models and the new models arising as a result of grand challenge approaches.
8.6 Curatorial work and grand challenges

Pickstone (1994: 113) recognises different types of cognitive work in STM - from ‘a general practitioner of medicine, to a taxonomist at the Natural History Museum, or a research physiologist in a university, or an industrial scientist developing micro-electronics’, grouping them into four types:

(a) savant/connoisseur or classical;
(b) analytical/comparative or museological/diagnostic;
(c) experimentalist; and
(d) techno-science, including techno-medicine.

In this context, Pickstone (1994) perceives a dynamic in which museological and diagnostic types of science, such as taxonomy and natural history more broadly, are seen as old-fashioned and marginal, thus leading to ‘relegation of the museum by the laboratories of the new biology’ -

*Those who advocated laboratories tended to see museums (or hospitals) as second-rate places for learning and creating knowledge – useful for the public, or for ‘mere practice’, but not the temples of science.*

*(Pickstone 1994: 132)*

This diagnosis is exactly what the Natural History Museum was trying to leave behind by aligning to the grand challenges thinking, transforming from a museum into a lab. However, this raises the issue of potential marginalisation of the collection care, new acquisitions, preservation, and interpretation, which also need to stay integral to the Museum’s long-term strategies, even if they are not always easy to reconcile with the urgency and agility required to align with grand challenge driven policies and funding. It also rises the issues of the appropriateness and long-term impacts of institutional research strategies and priorities as argued by Naggs (2022).

One issue raised is a long-term perspective of the traditional, collection-based science models (Naggs 2022; Interview G1.04). One of the interviewees for this study with a curatorial role at the Natural History Museum explained how his curatorial duties, which include a high level of taxonomic work, can be deployed to better understand changes in biodiversity over time. The interviewee described how the species of specific organisms collected in different parts of the
UK in the 1970s and preserved in the collection, help us to understand when this organism disappeared and became extinct (Interview G1.04). This is a practical example of how we can relate the Museum’s collections to the grand challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. However, we find that science policy and funding models informed by grand challenges are not able to engage with a five-decades long timeframe of this example, let alone a situation where we do not know how initial collecting activity might come to relate to future scientific challenges. To enable these long-term functions, institutions rely on the policies concerned with the long-term preservation of cultural and natural heritage. And there we see it again - the need for research functions in the UK national cultural organisation to work across governmental and policy boundaries, which, as we have seen, can be extremely challenging.

Another aspect of this curator’s work (Interview G1.04) that would be difficult to place within grand challenge frameworks is their focus on interpretation and supporting other scientists. As the interviewee explained -

*We have up to 300 scientists a year coming to work here, and we would give them access to the collection, providing an expert backbone for their research. Very often, because the collection has been accumulated over period of 300 years, we will find that the labels need interpretation, so one of the jobs of the curator here is to help the scientific community with interpreting the collection. Very often you will get a young researcher from anywhere in the world, who is very expert in a group of [organisms], but might not be experienced in interpreting, you know old geographical localities, or old handwritings, or things like that, so there is an interpretative function to what we do. Also, we have a general overview of not only the collections, but what is included within the collections, but also the organisms themselves, so generally we would be the best people around to talk about what a particular [organism] is likely to be. When you get 400,000 possibilities, if somebody brings in a potential [name of organism redacted for anonymisation] pest, or something like that, then, the first thing we will do is tell them what the group it belongs to, so that they can begin to look at the right places. (Interview G2.04)*

In this case of this interviewee, this curator’s work led to discovery of multiple new species (Interview G2.04). This interpretative and supporting role,
as well as identification and discovery of new species, are crucial for science. This role includes collecting and identifying new species in person, as well as through the elaborate system of collaborations with other institutions and experts worldwide (Interview G2.04). All these different facets of the curatorial role support each other. (For more examples see Appendix D, page 487).

There is much new vitality in the impressive Natural History Museum’s drive to address the ‘planetary emergency’ (NHM 2019), and the attempts to transform itself into a vital scientific infrastructure through its science expertise and new facilities, including the new digitisation and science centre planned at the Thames Valley Science Park (University of Reading 2022; NHM n.d.). However, it is also evident that the Museum must not discount more traditional, collection-based approaches in relation to its research functions, including the much-beleaguered taxonomy. This case study shows that the very nature of the ‘planetary emergency’ brings us back to taxonomy and longer-term, collection-based approaches to science. Britz et. al. (2020: 49) point out that we are losing species even before we discover them -

*With habitat loss at an unprecedented scale and speed, and other anthropogenic negative influences, the discovery and scientific documentation of biodiversity, in the form of species descriptions, is felt by many taxonomists as a race against time. Only species bearing a scientific name are entities recognized by society and politics for conservation, often with a strong bias towards the larger and charismatic species.* (Britz et. al. 2020: 49)

The issue arising for the Natural History Museum, and all other UK national cultural organisations, is that the policy and funding landscape in both science and culture is not suited for longer-term research approaches and infrastructural developments. This first became evident during the 1990s. The changes implemented at the time, as we have seen in this and in two previous case studies, have already led to significant changes of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, especially in embracing shorter-term goals and moving away from unpopular and often expensive longer-term approaches.
8.7 Conclusion

The Natural History Museum case study supports our initial hypothesis that in the 1990s the pressures in policy and funding environment created a series of critical junctures that led to significant changes in research functions of the UK national cultural organisations. In this case study we have seen a series of changes implemented at the Museum in a top-down fashion in the 1990s. The crisis leading to these changes was caused by financial difficulties and complex transformation needs across all Museum’s functions. The change of research functions was also influenced by scientific advances in the second half of the 20th century, especially in relation to taxonomy and systematic biology (NHM DF941/4 archival; House of Lords 1992, 2002a, 2008; Winker 2004).

The situation faced by the Natural History Museum in the 1990s has a lot in common to what we have seen in the British Museum case study, especially in relation to the effects of long-term underfunding and the need for organisational modernisation across many different functions (Edwards 1996 unpublished, also see Chapter 6, page 227. The Natural History Museum funding and scientific crisis coincided with the need to improve its public spaces, as well as to embrace new technologies in all aspects of its work. Many of the measures taken, such as the split of curatorial and scientific roles and the reduction in the Museum’s taxonomic capacity, remain unpopular with a section of its staff to this day (Interview G2.01, Naggs 2022). However, these changes have enabled the Museum to organise its scientific activity in a different way and play more central role in relation to the UK grand challenge led science policies and priorities (NHM 2009, 2010, 2013a&b, Interview G1.02). At the same time, the changes led to decline in the Museum’s traditional collection-based scientific capabilities, with the Museum showing more pronounced research characteristics of an organisation that is functioning like a research centre or a university (Interviews G1.02; G2.02; Naggs 2022).

The interviews also indicated further fragmentation between scientific functions and the Museum’s exhibitions, where there were some attempts being made to create stronger links, but there was a need to do more to achieve a holistic approach and ensure that scientific expertise translates more directly to the Museum’s public functions, such as exhibitions and events (Interviews G1.02; G1.04).
Neil Chalmers, Natural History Museum’s Director during the 1990s, and the Museum’s trustees at this time, played a pivotal role in enacting the changes to the Museum’s future direction, including its research functions (NHM DF933/80 archival; Bodmer 1990). This adds to the evidence, which we have also seen at the British Museum and other UK national cultural organisations that directors and trustees played a decisive and direct role in the transformation of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations in the 1990s (see Chapter 4, page 123).

Inevitably, directors and trustees are often reacting to the pressures created by governmental policy and funding. In the case of the Natural History Museum, we explored three UK Parliamentary Inquiries into the crisis of taxonomy and systematic biology (House of Lords 1992, 2002a, 2008), and how they relate to the changes at the Natural History Museum. The three Inquiries have shown a high-level of fragmentation across different government departments and arms-length bodies involved. This fragmentation and lack of direction and investment had a negative effect on research functions, not only at the Natural History Museum, but also at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (House of Commons 2014a&b 2015a&b). This finding supports our hypothesis that the on-going fragmentation of the UK cultural and science policies negatively affect research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. In this case we can see how the lack of governmental support and coordination contributed to the weakening of taxonomic and systematic biology capacity in the UK national cultural organisations.

As well as the role of governmental actors, this case study looked at scientific developments related to taxonomy and systematic biology, showing how rapid developments of these disciplines in the second part of the 20th century affected science in natural history museums (Krishtalka & Humphrey 2000; Winker 2004; Funk 2018). The significant level of disagreement regarding different approaches amongst scientists themselves (Garnett & Christidis 2017; Thomson et. al. 2018) has been another significant factor affecting the changes at the Natural History Museum, mainly because the disciplines’ uncertain position in relation to other scientific priorities, especially those prioritised by the grand challenges agenda (NERC 2011 archival). This finding helps us to see, as per our hypothesis, that challenges and advances in specific disciplinary fields, in this
case in taxonomy and systematic biology, could lead to changes in research functions at the UK national cultural organisations. In this case, these disciplinary changes and challenges have also contributed to decline in taxonomic capacity at the Natural History Museum (Gee 1990b; Naggs 2022). However, the change of direction has been positive for other scientific fields developed by the Museum, such as life sciences, evolutionary research and meteoritics (Interview G1.02; G2.02, NHM 2009, 2010; 2013a&b).

This case study examined how the Natural History Museum transformed its scientific model from one based on collection-based research and taxonomy-based science to a model more closely aligned to the UK science policy underpinned by the concept of grand challenges (Interview G2.02; NHM 2019). The case study shows that traditional style curatorial roles and collection-based research still exist at the Museum, and that they still include many traditional features of such roles, including acquisitions, preservation, and often high level of taxonomic research related to identification of species (Interviews G1.04; G2.02; also see Appendix D, page 487). However, there are many signs, especially in the way in which the Museum presents its strategy and describes its ambitions, that indicate that the value of these roles is not integrated with the Museum’s present scientific vision and that they are increasingly marginalised (Interview G1.04; NHM 2019; Naggs 2020). This presents a big challenge for the future the Museum’s collection, and even its grand challenge driven science strategy, which remains dependent on the Museum’s ability to maintain curatorial specialisms and collection-based research capabilities (Interview G1.04; Britz et. al. 2020; Naggs 2022).
9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

Conclusions and recommendations for this study fall into two parts. Section 9.2 (page 366) presents the overall conclusions of this study, including all its different elements and how they inform each other. Sections 9.3 (page 376) translates the study’s findings and conclusions into a set of recommendations for policy and operational improvements related to research functions in UK national cultural organisations. While these two sections are related, they are not the same. The study’s conclusions include all relevant findings of this study, regardless if they can be applied to achieve any improvements to the current situation. The policy recommendations, on the other hand, are informed by much more practical set of considerations that look at what would be important and realistically possible to change, if such change would result in tangible benefits, as well as by whom and how these changes could be made.

The study’s conclusions draw on the original contribution to knowledge made by this study, starting with the need to combine different theoretical frameworks to deepen our knowledge of this subject, and leading to key findings in relation to the significance of more integrated institutional epistemologies, the importance of broadening our definitions of value of culture to include research functions, and the value of linking this research to a deeper understanding of institutional developments and change processes (see page 366).

Thereafter, the conclusions point to key findings related to the past events, especially in relation to this study’s contributions to knowledge in terms of key changes that have taken place in relation to research functions in the UK national cultural organisation in the second half of the 20th and in the first decade of the 21st century, including how the UK government policy has been linked to these changes (page 367). The conclusions regarding the present situation draw on this study’s original contribution to knowledge regarding the current characteristics of research functions in UK national cultural organisations (page 370). There is also a section that discusses the future implications of this study’s findings, and my future research plans (page 374).

This study has also made an original contribution to the institutional
histories of the British Museum, the British Library, and the Natural History Museum by providing historic accounts describing development of research functions in these institutions. The conclusions relevant to each institution have already been made within the chapters discussing the institutional case studies (for British Museum see page 253; for British Library see page 310; for Natural History Museum see page 361).

The policy recommendation section includes further discussion regarding the choices made and the limitations of the approach taken in this section (see page 376).
9.2 Conclusions

9.2.1 Defining the new framework for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations

This thesis has laid a foundation for our understanding of research functions in UK national cultural organisations in their historic and their present context. Considering the lack of existing frameworks to study this area, outside of disciplinary confines of curatorial studies and museology, the thesis defined an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, which includes –

- Deepening our understanding of cultural institutions as epistemological platforms that create and disseminate knowledge, especially recognising the need to create stronger links between their public and research functions.
- Addressing the absence of research functions within the frameworks theorising and measuring the value of culture, especially in relation to informing UK cultural policy and developing new mechanisms to create links between science and cultural policies, research, and practice.
- Developing better understanding of organisational change processes in UK national cultural organisations to help investigate diverse drivers influencing institutional developments.

This approach made it possible to deploy a multilayered perspective that recognises the interlinked roles played by institutions and government, as well as other key influencers and stakeholders such as academia, media, and public. This has led to the following findings:

- While the situation is improving, there is still a strained relationship between public and research functions of UK national cultural organisations. This gap between different institutional functions exists in governmental policy, institutional practice, perceptions of professionals who work in the institutions, and in everyday operation of the institutions. A better integration would benefit both research and public functions.
• Research is not integrated in our understanding of social and economic value of the UK national cultural institutions. This means that we are not able to account for the value and impact of public investment into research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

9.2.2 The Past

This thesis is concerned with research functions of UK national cultural organisations in the second half of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century. This investigation has added to our understanding of key characteristics of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations in this period, the way in which they developed, and the role of UK governmental policies and institutional interactions with government in relation to these changes. The thesis proposed four hypotheses -

1) That institutional governance influences the way in which research functions develop in cultural organisations, especially due to the way in which institutions chose to react to the pressures created by governmental policy, funding, and other external and internal events.

2) That the on-going fragmentation of the UK cultural and science policies negatively affects research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, and that institutional strategies and behaviours in the UK national cultural organisations show a gradual move from research-led to culture-led policy and strategic drivers.

3) That during the 1990s, the pressures in policy and funding environment, combined with the need to reform both research and public functions of UK national cultural organisations, created a series of critical junctures that led to significant changes in the way in which research functions operate in the UK national cultural organisations.

4) That the broader advances within science and research, especially within relevant disciplinary fields, influence the change of research functions in the UK national cultural institutions, and that this change could lead to improvements and corresponding advancement in institutional research functions, but also to their decline and even disappearance.

By analysing archival information, interviews with participants from
different organisations and developing three case studies, from the British Museum, the British Library and Natural History Museum, the thesis has validated all four hypotheses.

The data analysis led to the following findings -

- The 1990s and the early 2000s show a high level of institutional transformation which included restructuring, job cuts, changes in the way resources are allocated to different activities, professionalisation of public facing functions, increase in managerial capacity, changes in make-up and focus of governing bodies, and adjustments in institutional priorities and strategies. The restructures affecting curatorial departments at the time were linked to the narratives about moving away from scholarship and ultimately jeopardising development, preservation and understanding of national collections. These multiple pressures in many institutions combined to create a point of critical juncture, leading to changes in the way in which research functions are structured and how they operate. These changes often included a move towards project-based, externally funded research and shorter-term research goals.

- Historically, institutional governance bodies and directors provided a direct leadership role in shaping future direction of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. We have seen in the examples of British Museum, British Library, and Natural History Museum that their institutional governance has been central in shaping the future of their research functions. The big issue arising is that trustee and director accountability for the way in which research functions develop and change was not defined, which is still the case today. This means that these changes tended not to be part of institutional reporting to the government and were often not included amongst key outcomes that the government required institutions to deliver. This means that research functions were, and continue to be, particularly vulnerable to individual approaches and sudden changes under new directors and governing bodies, as opposed to any specific national policy framework.
This thesis showed multiple examples of governmental fragmentation affecting research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. This means that relevant policy and decision-making was sitting across different government departments or arms-length bodies making it difficult to connect relevant policy and investments. This is both historic and present situation for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. From the absence of British Library in science policies related to scientific publishing to the government’s inability to act in a coordinated way in the case of taxonomy and systematic biology, this problem has been central to all three case studies and has also been prominent in our interviews. The institutions have sought to address this issue by developing relationships with the government bodies concerned with science and research, which was successful and helped them to keep research work going. There were even some advantages in relation to this fragmented governmental environment, as this situation meant that institutions were able to understand multiple policy contexts, as well as to broaden a range of potential funding sources. However, the fragmentation also contributed to research functions gradually transforming into a project-based, short-term, income generating type of activity. The disconnect between cultural and science policy spheres has led to some far-reaching examples of the loss of research capacity. In the case of British Library, there are only five decades from its foundation at the centre of UK science infrastructure to its move away from playing any significant role in the present science information landscape.

In our historic examples we discovered that institutions themselves can have a negative impact on their own research functions, often through bad management decisions, poor planning, and lack of financial control. This could affect research functions even when an institution sees research as its key priority, especially at the time of financial crisis. One such case was the financial and operational over-reach in the case of the completion of the Great Court at the British Museum, which has led to the loss in curatorial capacity and a change in the way
research functions operate. This does not mean that all the effects of such situations are negative, as we have seen that this type of pressure can help institutions modernise its research functions. However, there is evidence that the move towards project-led environment is replacing longer-term considerations.

- It was to be expected that some changes in research functions of UK national cultural organisations came as a result of advances in relevant disciplines, or the way scientific infrastructures evolved. This thesis shows that when such changes take place, they can have both beneficial and negative effect on research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. In some cases, such changes can lead to very significant problems in the institutions. We have seen this in relation to taxonomy and systematic biology in the Natural History Museum, and in relation to scientific publications at the British Library. The changes in scientific environment led to the institutions choosing a course of action that altered their traditional scientific and research roles. Combined with the issue of governmental fragmentation, the need to modernise institutions across multiple functions, and the move to short-term, project-led research cycles, this has especially impacted the UK national cultural organisations in their role as long-term, collection-based research infrastructures. The study identified a tendency to move from the research functions that require long-term development and investment towards shorter-term and project-bound activities, often linked to the present policy priorities.

9.2.3 The Present

On one level, we have seen that research is thriving in the UK national cultural organisations today. Supported by a range of external funding sources and backed by growing governmental science investments, the institutions have been developing and delivering ambitious research projects, increasingly publishing in high-ranking publications, supporting doctoral students and early career researchers, experimenting with new technologies, and developing new and ambitious research collaborations.
Based on the interview data analysis, this thesis has found the following –

- The UK research impact policies have contributed to stimulating research in UK national cultural organisations and have enlivened their collaboration with universities, despite frequent misunderstandings and different motivations for such collaborations. Inadvertently, the research impact agenda helped the institutions to start bridging the divide between their public and research functions, in terms of research underpinning exhibitions, but also in terms of encouraging new collaborations with different communities, different types of outreach organisations, international partners, and with creative industries. On the negative side, this means that the UK national cultural organisations are increasingly seen as amplifiers of research impact rather than collection-based research infrastructures with long-term research significance.

- The IRO status of the UK national cultural organisations has been instrumental in enabling research functions in the UK national cultural organisations to survive and to develop in the first half of the 21st century. AHRC especially played a crucial role in stimulating research in the UK national cultural organisations focusing on arts and humanities research.

- The institutions have developed stronger research policies than they had in the past, and they now operate their own version of research offices with the roles focused on supporting externally funded, project-based research, especially in terms of supporting bidding for research funding. While these support functions are not as developed as their university equivalents and have many challenges still to address, they have come a long way in the last decade.

- The pattern of project-led, externally funded research has become more established and professionalised, and as such it is mostly integrated within institutional missions and strategies.
• The ability of research functions to attract external funding makes them more attractive to UK national cultural organisations. However, this also means research functions are now much more marginal within institutions. Nowadays they are either not at all, or are only in part, supported by institutional grant-in-aid allocations, making these activities very easy to stop if the funding situation becomes challenging. The actual cost of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations is not known, as it is not reported by the institutions. This means that research functions are very vulnerable to any changes in the UK research and science funding environment, where the institutions have very little direct influence. This vulnerability is even more pronounced because the UK research funders do not carry any responsibility for infrastructural elements of institutional research offer.

• Research active staff in the UK national cultural organisations feel passionately about their research and its collection-based character to the point that they are often ready to accept lower pay than they would achieve in universities. However, they often feel marginalised in institutions because institutions are primarily focused on public elements of their offer, and because institutional core governmental obligations and reporting exclude research. The research active staff often perceive this situation as a lack of governmental remit for research.

• This thesis has shown that there is a total absence of governmental policy for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. A level of cross-governmental and cross-organisational policy that would be integrated by DCMS with other institutional functions and KPIs would provide more direction and security for research functions across the UK national cultural organisations, and potentially across the broader GLAM sector.

The present moment for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations is, on one level, tremendously exciting, with new, ambitious developments, collaborations, and funding routes opening the types of
opportunities that were previously rare in the sector. Equally, it is a time of insecurity and fast-paced change across the UK public sector, which means that there is a significant level of uncertainty as to the future of research functions in UK national cultural organisations, especially in terms of their longer-term, collection-based and infrastructural elements.

The areas where new research would help us tackle some of these issues include –

- New models for integrating science and cultural policies and understanding of social and economic value with a view of forming a new value matrix that would better represent institutions as integrated entities by adding their research functions into their core policy frameworks.
- Better understanding of the role of new technologies in development of research function in UK national cultural organisations, including both lessons learned from the past developments and the future potential.
- Understanding of institutions as long-term research infrastructures, including the importance and future potential and development needs for collection-based, long-term research infrastructures.
- International aspects of institutional research functions, especially understanding of those elements that form international research infrastructures.
- Exploration of differences and potential for bridging gaps between academic research modes and collection-based research.

Many aspects of this thesis have direct policy implications. They are explored later on in this chapter.
9.2.4 The Future

My own future research is likely to be in the areas on technological advances and their impact on research functions at the British Library and across GLAM sector. Most immediately this will include the areas of data-based research, AI and machine learning, especially policy underpinnings of these technological developments. One of key problem arising in this area is the absence of appropriate digital research infrastructures in GLAM. This directly impacts potential for future research developments, but also for future collecting, discovery, access, and preservation. In my professional role, I will be focusing on finding pragmatic opportunities for policy developments that could create a more stable footing to integrate research with governmental and institutional policy frameworks used to develop, manage, and evaluate UK national cultural organisations.

In terms of the likely futures for the UK national cultural organisations and their research functions, on one level, the future of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations will develop in line with new scientific developments. This is already raising many new questions such as - Could we develop better machine learning language models if we used the British Library digital collections to understand algorithmic bias? Could we improve the Earth’s biodiversity outcomes if we were to utilise all Natural History Museum’s data? Could we transform our knowledge of the past and its impact on the present by further integrating different communities in the way we understand collection-based research? Or, maybe the future will mean that the use of ancient DNA will enable de-extinction of dodos, mammoths, and dinosaurs, forming a future Jurassic Park (Kenneally 2023; Yamagata 2019; Griffin & O’Connor 2018). Or, maybe there will be a metaverse version of ancient Egypt where you can chat with an AI-powered King Tut. The possibilities are endless.

Less exciting, but essential, the future of research functions in UK national cultural organisation will be possible only if we find the way to redefine the institutions to fully integrate their research and science purposes with our understanding of what the UK national cultural organisations are for. This would mean that as a society we would need to see these institutions as accountable for using their collections to contribute to new research questions about nature and society for the benefit of all. This would also mean new strategic and future-
orienteered commitments to research functions within institutions and across the government. It would also mean a defined accountability for the necessary resources and the results of this activity, including a better integration of research functions within institutional governance and reporting. It would also mean building much stronger links between institutional research and public functions, and more integrated effort to engage public with research and science, choosing the ways that challenge and educate as well as entertain. It would mean taking on the challenge to tackle the questions of collection provenances and difficult parts of institutional histories in a manner of open research enquiry.

As for the governmental policy and influence, looking to the past, we can say that more holistic, cross-governmental view of the UK national cultural organisations would be beneficial, especially in forming a long-term, public commitment that the UK national cultural institutions are also the UK long-term science and research infrastructures, as well as being places of public learning and entertainment.
9.3 Recommendations for policy and operational improvements for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations

9.3.1 Context for policy recommendations

This section presents a series of recommendations for policy and operational improvements for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, based on the conclusions and findings of this thesis.

Research is an important part of evidence-based policy making. However, research evidence, in its own right, is not sufficient to develop new governmental and institutional policies, especially in the complex environments that include numerous stakeholders with different perspectives and different needs such as in the case of the UK national cultural organisations. Therefore, to develop a set of such policies, we would require additional processes, such as a formal consultation with relevant stakeholders in the UK national cultural organisations, as well as across GLAM sector, central government departments, arms-length bodies, higher education, public, business, and other stakeholders with interest in UK national cultural organisations, their collections, and services. Any policy development would also have to consider a range of governmental and institutional drivers and dependencies – from their current appetite to spend time and resources on developing new policy in this area, to the availability of funding and resources to implement any required changes. In the absence of all these processes, this section represents a set of suggestions regarding different issues that could be looked at and improved.

At the time of writing, both within the UK national cultural organisations and within the government this area is not seen as a policy priority, which would reduce any chances of significant new policy and investment. Therefore, it would be more likely that some of the recommendations presented here could be implemented incrementally through gradual changes rather than as a development of the new suite of policies.

One disadvantage of this document is that it is focused solely on the UK national cultural organisations, following the focus of this study. In the real policy environment, this type of policy work would need to include the broader GLAM sector, especially looking into regional aspects of GLAM research. However, in
the research environment we can embrace a freedom to explore and re-think possible solutions. This section is written in this spirit of exploring a set of possible recommendations, which could serve as a stimulus for discussing and seeking relevant policy improvements, notwithstanding the need to explore the broader GLAM and regional contexts. The UK devolved administrations’ policy context is also not included here, and this would further increase the complexity of any real policy exercise in this area.

The UK national cultural institutions are very different to each other. Their research functions develop at different speed and in line with their own unique environment. The findings and recommendations provided are looking only into the improvements that could benefit the sector, not any individual institution.

This section deals only with the issues that are pertinent at the time of writing, not with any historic issues that are explored in this study. This means that the findings of this study are adjusted to align to the contemporary policy context, which is a pre-requisite for engaging policy makers and government. This means that the recommendation findings are simplified in relation to the thesis’ conclusions and findings.

9.3.2 Findings and recommendations

Finding 1:

There is a misalignment of different types of institutional functions undertaken in the UK national cultural organisations, especially those that are public facing and those related to research and science. This happens because the totality of institutional activities is spread across different government departments and their remits, which is having a negative effect on long-term planning, development, and sustainability of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

Why this should be addressed:

The absence of more defined governmental understanding that research in an integral part of the UK national cultural organisations’ remit, especially within DCMS, means that research functions are not always properly integrated in the institutional long-term plans, or in the governmental policies and investment
frameworks. In particular, the lack of dialogue on this matter between cultural and research government departments means that this area of institutional activity is often marginalised, fragmented, and not considered when it comes to the future institutional and sectoral developments. It is often difficult to connect different parts of government in order to inform more significant opportunities and investments. This fragmentation also perpetuates ambiguity in regard to institutional research missions and legitimacy of their research and science remits at different levels – from institutional governing bodies to staff and potential investors and collaborators.

Who could address these issues: DCMS, Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), National Museums’ Director Council (NMDC)

Recommendation 1:
- DCMS and DSIT should introduce a new cross-departmental policy that would recognise UK national cultural organisations as an integral part of both UK cultural and research and science ecosystems.

What needs to be done:
- Commission an independent report on research functions across the UK national cultural organisations, looking to provide up-to-date national picture regarding their research functions, including current capacity, achievements, and challenges and opportunities arising.
- Include institutional research functions within DCMS reviews of the UK national cultural organisations, including a full recognition of their role in the UK research ecosystem and contribution towards the UK science and research priorities, the importance of research and science in supporting institutional public functions, the importance of institutional provision of key UK research infrastructures, and the significance of research funding accessed by the UK national cultural organisations.
- Ensure that institutional research and science KPIs are included in the institutional annual grant-in-aid agreements, and that they are agreed through a cross-departmental dialogue between DCMS and DSIT.

Impact and benefits if implemented:
• Strengthening UK research and innovation and its capability to provide answers to key global challenges, as well as increase UK prosperity by creating new knowledge.
• Maximising impacts of government investment through better policy, strategic planning, and collaboration.
• More efficient use of public resources.

**Finding 2:**

Research is not integrated in our understanding of social and economic value of UK national cultural institutions. This means that we are not able to account for the value of public investment in research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, including value of research supporting public programmes, acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of national collections.

**Why this should be addressed:**

Excluding research from our understanding of social and economic value of UK national cultural institutions presents an incomplete picture of institutional impact on economy and society. It also creates an incomplete picture of how taxpayer money is spent in the sector. It presents an inadequate picture of institutional activities and impacts, and it perpetuates divisions between their public and research functions.

**Who could address these issues:** DCMS, DSIT, UKRI, NMDC, UK national cultural organisations
Recommendation 2:
- Relevant government departments and UK national cultural organisations should develop and include in their reporting both cultural and research impact measures when capturing economic and social value of the UK national cultural organisations.

What needs to done:
- Commission research that would recommend a range of research and science value measures, relevant evaluation principles, and key indicators that are relevant for these activities.
- Include research and science impact and value in institutional reporting.

Impact and benefits if implemented:
- Better understanding of impacts of publicly funded institutions.
- Improved planning of future investments and their impact.

Finding 3:

Over time we have seen a decline in policy, understanding, development, and investment related to the UK cultural institutions as long-term research infrastructures.

Why this should be addressed:

The lack of recognition that single institutions, or sometimes a group of institutions form key research infrastructures, means that we do not have a complete picture of the UK research and science infrastructures, and how they could develop and contribute to the UK science and research priorities. While the UKRI policies and the UK Research Infrastructure Roadmap include the UK national cultural institutions, they are lost amongst a diverse group of infrastructures. This means that we do not understand this large subsector that shares some common characteristics, that is of international importance, and that can act together to maximise its impact. It also means that a cross-disciplinary nature of these infrastructures is not understood. This also means that the current
infrastructure investments are planned on short-term project basis, rather than looking how to maximise their sustainability by aligning them with long-term institutional strategies.

Who could address these issues: DCMS, DSIT, UKRI, UK national cultural organisations, Royal Society and British Academy

Recommendation 3:

- UK research and science infrastructure policies and investment should recognise UK national cultural institutions as long-term, cross-disciplinary infrastructures, operating both nationally and internationally, and focus any future infrastructure investments towards sustainable developments that are integrated with and supported by institutional long-term strategies.

What needs to be done:

- Create a high-level cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary body that could consider long-term infrastructure opportunities in the UK national cultural organisations that support UK research and science priorities. Ensure that any such priorities align with institutional long-term strategies (e.g. including institutional present remits, any future capital projects, collection development, digital strategies etc.).
- Encourage greater collaboration within and external to the sector, including private sector and universities, especially in relation to capital projects.
- Consider if there are any relevant lessons learned by the Research Capital Investment Fund run by Research England, especially in terms of sustainability, stimulating private investment, and institutional capacity and capability building.
- Address digital infrastructure as a separate opportunity, as discussed in Recommendation 4. This would reflect the urgency of digital developments and the immediate nature of opportunities arising.

Impact and benefits if resolved:
- Increased sustainability and impact of research and science infrastructure investments.
- Improved sustainability of research in the UK national cultural organisations.

Finding 4:

There is a lack of cross-institutional vision, policy, and planning in relation to digital infrastructures and research.

Why this should be addressed:

Digital and technology developments are continuing to change economy and society, creating both challenges and opportunities for the UK national cultural organisations that need to transform their current operations, as well as develop new, innovative solutions. Research and science, in particular, are being transformed by new technologies across all disciplines. UK national cultural institutions have shown a significant level of ambition and initiative in relation to digitising their collections, collecting born-digital objects, as well as exploiting research opportunities afforded by new technologies – from VR/XR engaging new audiences to deploying AI and machine learning methods.

While each institution will need to develop their own digital strategy and capabilities, cross-sectoral digital strategy would ensure that the sector benefits from a joined up approach, common standards, shared infrastructures, and ensuring interoperability. The projects such as Towards a national collection are pointing to some shared opportunities. However, we currently do not have a cross-sectoral strategy that would set a common direction in the development of relevant infrastructures and capacities, especially on operational level. Much of current work, including Towards a national collection, is focused on developing new methods and relevant research questions and user cases. This is useful in helping us to understand new research directions. However, what is not addressed is a shared capacity and approach to underlying digital infrastructures – such as digital storage and computational capacity, digital research workflows and processes for data ingest, preservation and sharing, skill development, as well as policies underpinning data access, copyright, and re-use. These cannot be developed outside of institutional strategies, thus requiring a consultation in
relation to institutional long-term strategies.

This does not mean that there should be one single collective infrastructure for all. In many instances, the UK national cultural organisations underpin specific infrastructures related to their activities either nationally or internationally. For example, natural history collections are developing international digital infrastructures, libraries have their own interconnected digital infrastructures including electronic legal deposit, there are also digital infrastructures concerned with archaeology and heritage science. However, there are also many common concerns, where more could be achieved working together. For example, this could include better access to computational power needed for research tasks when utilising large data, improving interoperability for discovery of digital collections, and harmonisation of access and reuse policies. This could also include the currently existing systems that might need modernisation and futureproofing.

Who could address these issues: DCMS, DSIT, UK national cultural organisations, UKRI

Recommendation 4:

- As a part of cross-sectoral infrastructure discussion (see Recommendation 3), develop a cross-sectoral digital strategy for UK national cultural organisations that recognises a range of digital infrastructures that institutions already have and their importance for UK innovation and research, and identify future investment needs and opportunities to maximise collaboration and scale up necessary investments.

What needs to be done:

- Map current digital infrastructures in the UK national cultural organisations and their significance for UK research and innovation.
- Identify gaps and cross-sector opportunities for future investments.
- Identify opportunities that would benefit from cross-sectoral approach and additional collaborations with private sector, higher education, and other relevant organisations.
Impact and benefits if resolved:

- More efficient and impactful investments in digital infrastructures.
- Improved opportunities for future research.

**Finding 5:**

The IRO status of the UK national cultural organisations has been instrumental in enabling research functions in these institutions to survive and to develop. AHRC has especially played a crucial role in stimulating research in the UK national cultural organisations focusing on arts and humanities research. This success could be built upon by seeking to develop further understanding of key characteristics of research functions in GLAM sector across all disciplines, and its unique contribution of UK innovation and science.

**Why this should be addressed:**

GLAM institutions with the IRO status undertake research that is equivalent in quality to research done in higher education institutions. While this equivalent status is something to be celebrated, it does not mean that this research is the same as research undertaken in universities. Our understanding of key characteristics of GLAM research remains underdeveloped, which means that we are not maximising the opportunities offered by the sector. Equally, it means we do not have a good knowledge of how research capacity in the sector can be developed and supported.

In particular, there is a continuing change in relation to how curatorial, scientific, technical, and other roles in the UK national cultural organisations contribute to institutional research functions. While there is no one right way to develop research capability of institutions and their staff, there is an opportunity to develop better understanding of diversity of roles involved with research in GLAM, required skills development, career pathways, pay gap in relation to other research environments, and equality and diversity.

Also, the capacity and knowledge developed in the UK national cultural organisations could be more effectively shared with the broader GLAM sector, especially smaller GLAM organisations that are in need of additional support.
Who could address these issues: UKRI, GLAM institutions, Arts Council, British Academy, Royal Society

**Recommendation 5:**

- Develop better understanding of key characteristics of research and science undertaken by and supported by GLAM institutions to enable this sector to develop stronger research and science capacity and more effectively contribute to UK innovation and science challenges.

**What needs to be done:**

- Commission research that will identify different types of research undertaken in the GLAM sector, its key characteristics, range of staff involved, pathways to impact, capacity, skills requirements, and future opportunities for supporting UK innovation and science.
- Develop and offer skills development programmes for GLAM staff, who are research active or wish to become research active.

**Impact and benefits if resolved:**

- More robust research and science capacity in GLAM institutions.
- New opportunities for staff development and capacity building.
- Improved sustainability of research functions in GLAM institutions.

**Finding 6:**

Finding 1 emphasises the need for better cross-governmental policy links related to research functions of the UK national cultural organisations. Within institutions themselves there is an improving, but still not fully integrated, relationship between public and research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. Greater integration would benefit both research and public functions.

**Why this should be addressed:**

The absence of stronger links between research and public facing functions (e.g. exhibitions, events, public services etc.) is detrimental to both set
of activities, as well as to the overall public value of institutional activities. The weak link between these activities leads to research with poor impact, on one side, and low-quality experiences and content offered to the public, on the other side. While the link between these two sets of activities has been improving over the last decade, it is still an accidental and optional outcome, rather than something that is pre-planned by institutions as a standard way of working.

Who could address these issues: UK national cultural organisations

Recommendation 6:

- UK national cultural organisations should ensure that there is a stronger integration between their public facing activities and their research strategies.

What needs to be done:

- UK national cultural organisations should plan their research and public facing activities in the way that stimulates collaboration across these two areas.
- Publish relevant case studies and evaluate impact of activities that integrate public facing and research functions.

Impact and benefits if resolved:

- Higher quality public offer in the UK national cultural organisations.
- New channels to communicate and involve public with research and science.
- Improved pathways to research impacts.
- New education opportunities.
Finding 7:

There is poor and uneven reporting of research outcomes, funding, capacity, and research impacts in the UK national cultural organisations.

Why this should be addressed:

Current reporting provides a limited insight into the overall volume and quality of research in the UK national cultural organisations. This means that we do not have a very good knowledge of how effective and successful these activities are, what is their value, outcomes, and impact.

The evidence that we currently use to measure institutional performance in this area is insufficient. While GLAM research is not directly comparable to university research, and we should not create the same assessment systems as used in higher education, and especially not create a version of GLAM REF, we do need a set of data that can help us measure this activity, including its value, impact, capacity and how it is developing over time.

Who could address these issues: DCMS, DSIT, NMDC, UK national cultural organisations

Recommendation 7:

Agree a set of research KPIs that can be reported by all UK national cultural organisations.

What needs to be done:

- Agree a set of core KPIs that can be tracked are reported by all UK national cultural organisations.
- Institutions to define and set up additional KPIs that are relevant to their specific context.
- Establish core principles that contextualise and define research KPIs in the UK national cultural organisations. (For example, the sector might decide to emphasise a broader range of outcomes that communicate their research in addition to academic publications.)

Impact and benefits if resolved:
• Improving evidence base that informs our understanding of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.
• Improving performance of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.

Finding 8:

Institutional governance of research functions is essential for their future development within the UK national cultural organisations. Institutional governing bodies need to include research functions development into their on-going governance and planning considerations, especially in terms of long-term institutional strategies.

Why this should be addressed:

UK national cultural organisations are bodies that work within long-term strategic outlook that considers many issues that have much longer-term considerations than the most immediate governmental policy concerns. The institutional governing bodies are best placed to set policies that affect institutional long-term development. They are also key decision makers in terms of institutional priorities and future strategies. While many institutions have a form of governance for their research, this is not always formally set as an area that is regularly scrutinised on the highest governance level. Considering rapid changes in innovation and research environment, institutional governance should be able to ensure that institutions are putting in place relevant research strategies and implementing changes that can enable them to stay relevant in this fast-changing environment, and that their collections and infrastructures are developing maximum benefit to UK innovation and research.

Who could address these issues: UK national cultural organisations
Recommendation 8:

Governing bodies of UK national cultural organisations should regularly scrutinise institutional research and science strategies, their implementation and effectiveness, as well as their impact and role within the UK innovation and research ecosystem.

What needs to be done:

- Trustees of the UK national cultural organisations should consider the integration of research functions with institutional strategies and plans.
- UK national cultural organisations should track their research performance and integrate it into their organisational reporting on all levels.

Impact and benefits if resolved:

- Improved leadership, accountability, and reporting for research functions in the UK national cultural organisations.
- Harnessing internal opportunities to make institutional links with other activities where the opportunities arise.
- Improved public value of organisational offer.

Finding 9:

There are many successful collaborations between UK national cultural organisations and higher education. However, there are also many difficulties and barriers to such collaborations due to different motivations, operational priorities, financial constraints, organisational cultures, and research priorities within these two sectors. More could be done to improve the mutual understanding and relevance of these collaboration across both sectors.

Why this should be addressed:

The UK higher education and cultural sectors are both concerned with creation of new knowledge, education, impact of research, and public engagement. In the UK these two sectors are also both known for their global excellence. The strength of expertise on both sides, as well as a unique range of
UK national collections would enhance innovation and research opportunities, research impact, and opportunities for new educational programmes.

The current barriers to deeper collaboration are often caused by different systems and policies underpinning these two sectors, meaning that these sectors are motivated by different outcomes, work with different timelines in mind, and deploy their resources in different ways. Also, higher education is much bigger sector, better resourced, and with much greater number of staff, which means that its needs can easily overwhelming UK national cultural organisations. Better understanding of key priorities in each sector would enhance mutual understanding and collaboration.

Who could address these issues: UK national cultural organisations, universities, UKRI, DCMS, DSIT

Recommendation 9:
- Incentivise new types of collaborations across UK national cultural organisations and universities in the way that benefits both sectors, using their different capabilities to achieve unique research outcomes, greater public reach, economic and social impacts.

What needs to be done:
- Run university focused workshops and open days in UK national cultural organisations focused on understanding research priorities in both sectors.
- Adapt existing research funding opportunities, or issue new research funding calls that are looking to enhance longer-term outcomes and capacity building in both sectors.
- Publish research on key characteristics of research in the UK national cultural organisations to improve understanding of research and science in this sector (Recommendation 5).
- Enhance physical and digital infrastructures enabling better discovery and access of national collections (Recommendations 3 & 4).
• Continue to stimulate collaborations involving PhD students and early career researchers, including enhanced skills training.

Impact and benefits if resolved:

• Higher quality and unique research outcomes.
• Enhanced research impact.
• Cross-sectoral capacity building.
• Enhanced impact on early career researchers.
Figure 18 summarises the recommendations –

### Enhancing research functions in the UK national cultural organisations

#### Recommendations

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<td>• Relevant government departments and UK national cultural organisations should develop and include in their reporting both cultural and research impact measures when capturing economic and social value of the UK national cultural organisations.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
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<tr>
<td>• UK research and science infrastructure policies and investment should recognise UK national cultural institutions as long-term, cross-disciplinary infrastructures, operating both nationally and internationally, and focus any future infrastructure investments towards sustainable developments that are integrated with and supported by institutional long-term strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As a part of cross-sectoral infrastructure discussion, develop a cross-sectoral digital strategy for UK national cultural organisations that recognises a range of digital infrastructures that institutions already have and their importance for UK innovation and research, as well as identify future investment needs and opportunities to maximise collaboration and scale up necessary investments.</td>
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<th>Institutional governance and reporting</th>
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<tr>
<td>• UK national cultural organisations should ensure that there is a stronger integration between their public facing activities and their research strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Agree a set of research KPIs that can be reported by all UK national cultural organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Governing bodies of UK national cultural organisations should regularly scrutinise institutional research and science strategies, their implementation and effectiveness, as well as their impact and role within the UK innovation and research ecosystem.</td>
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<th>Research and capacity building</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop better understanding of key characteristics of research and science undertaken by and supported by GLAM institutions to enable this sector to develop stronger research and science capacity and more effectively contribute to UK innovation and science challenges.</td>
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<th>Collaboration with higher education</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Incentivise new types of collaborations across UK national cultural organisations and universities in the way that benefits both sectors, using their different capabilities to achieve unique research outcomes, greater public reach, economic and social impacts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 18 - Recommendations for enhancing research functions of the UK national cultural organisations
10 Archival sources and bibliography

10.1 Archival sources


BM Trustees (archival): The British Museum Board of Trustees:

BM Board of Trustees 1985-1996

BM Board of Trustees 1998-2009

BM Scholarship (archival): The British Museum Board on Scholarship

A1002/99/13/01:

BM Committee on Scholarship 1974-1979 - Box 1

BM Committee on Scholarship 1980-1984 - Box 2

BM Committee on Scholarship 1985-1989 - Box 3

BM Committee on Scholarship 1990-1994 - Box 4

BM Committee on Scholarship 1995-2001 - Box 5

BM Excavation (archival): The British Museum on Excavation and Fieldwork:

BM Committee on Excavation and Fieldwork, 10 March 1999 – File 1

BM Committee on Excavation and Fieldwork, 8 December 1999 – File 2

BM Keepers (archival): The British Museum Keepers’ Committee:

BM Keepers’ Committee 1996-2000

DCMS (archival), 2008. The British Museum: Funding Agreement 2008-11. DCMS and British Museum. (previously available online)


DCMS (archival), 2013. Spending Round 2013, Rt Hon Maria Miller MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to Niall Fitzgerald and


DCMS (archival), 2017b (archival). British Museum Management Agreement 2016-2020. DCMS and British Museum. (previously available online)


NHM DF941/4 (archival): Corporate Plan 1990-95, including:

Museum Corporate Plan 1990-1995

The Restructuring of the Department of Library Services

NHM DF933/80 (archival): OAL and Commons response to CP [Corporate Plan], including:

2 February 1990 - Charles Henderson (OAL) letter to Neil Chalmers

Chalmers & Miles - Internal note from Roger Miles to Neil Chalmers suggesting amendments to the reply to Charles Henderson at OAL

22 May 1990 – Letter Neil Chalmers to Charles Henderson

19 June 1990 - Note of telephone conversation between Neil Chalmers and Ian Baxter (OAL)

21 June 1990a - Letter from Neil Chalmers to T Dalyell MP

21 June 1990b - Letter from Neil Chalmers to Mark Fisher MP

20 July 1990 – Letter from Neil Chalmers to Ian Baxter (OAL)

NHM DF933/83 (archival): Press and CP [Corporate Plan], including:

Selection of press cuttings from 1990

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1 June 1990 - Letter from Walter Bodmer to Sir Anthony Laughton

Bodmer & Chalmers - A typed copy of Bodmer’s article for Nature with a note from Neil Chalmers circulatng to all Keepers

NHM DF935 (archival): Departmental Annual Reports 1994-97, including:

Annual Departmental reports 1994-1995
Annual Departmental reports 1995-1996
Annual departmental reports 1996-1997

TNA DSIR 17/129 (archival): Science Museum: proposed transfer from Board of Education to DSIR. The National Archives, Kew.

TNA DSIR 36/3558 (archival): British Museum Research Committee: general papers of DSIR. The National Archives, Kew.


10.2 Documents obtained from organisations and individuals


10.3 Bibliography


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[https://doi.org/10.1108/eb008495](https://doi.org/10.1108/eb008495)


Bodmer, W., 1990. The museum that has to change. *Nature*. 345, 569–570. https://doi.org/10.1038/345569a0


Boxshall, G., Self, D., 2011. *UK Taxonomy & Systematics Review. Results of survey undertaken by the Review Team at the Natural History Museum serving as contractors to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)*.

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[https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015626449](https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015626449)


[https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/The%20contribution%20of%20the%20arts%20and%20culture%20to%20the%20national%20economy.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/The%20contribution%20of%20the%20arts%20and%20culture%20to%20the%20national%20economy.pdf)


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https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-5193(65)90083-4
Volume II
This Curriculum Vitae has been created to ensure transparent approach to the author’s bias in relation to this study. It lists the author’s work responsibilities that are relevant for this study. This does not eliminate the bias, which is inevitable for the subject that is closely related to the author’s work, but it does provide further background information to help the reader assess the author’s likely bias.

Prior to 2011

Employment prior to 2011 not related to the subject matter of this study, it includes working for PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, London Development Agency, and Middlesex University. In all these roles my specialism was higher education - including research, science, and innovation policy, investment policies, institutional operations, university management and finance. While this informs my knowledge of the policy environments relevant for this study, my work prior to 2011 was not related the GLAM sector or any of UK national cultural organisations.

British Library

Director of Science and Innovation – August 2023 - present

Head of Higher Education and Science October 2019 – August 2023

Head of Higher Education, August 2011 – September 2019

- Member of the British Library’s Senior Leadership Team and Directors’ Group, responsible for higher education, science and innovation, including strategy development, new projects and strategic partnerships.
- Responsible for the British Library’s senior-level relationships with higher education, science and research stakeholders in government, arms-length bodies, and individual universities.
• Providing advice on all matters related to higher education, science and research to the British Library Chair, CEO and Chief Librarian.
• Member of the British Library Research Strategy Group, an internal governance committee providing cross-organisational governance of research.
• Not responsible for: British Library IRO status, research development office, postgraduate students and internships, research services.

Membership of Boards and Committees relevant for the study:
• UKRI/NERC – Building a green future, Advisory Board, May 2023 - present
• Knowledge Quarter – Board member, October 2019 – present.
• AHRC - Advisory Board, September 2017 – September 2023.

Specific areas of work relevant for the study

Stakeholder relationships:
• UKRI – responsible for the British Library relationship with UKRI and its constituent parts since its inception. This includes stakeholder relationships with the individual Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England.
• Stakeholder relationship with the pre UKRI research, science and higher education arms-length bodies – HEFCE/Research England, RCUK, individual Research Councils.
• BEIS (and predecessor bodies) – shared relationship and policy brief with the British Library policy team.

Open Access:
• Shared responsibility for the British Library Open Access policy, advocacy, and initiatives until 2016.
• Universities UK (UUK) Open Access Coordination Group – member on behalf of the British Library - until 2016.
• RCUK Advisory Board of the UK Open Data Concordat – member on behalf of the British Library - until 2016.
• Universities UK Open Access Implementation Group for Monographs – member on behalf of the British Library - until 2016.


• AHRC open access advisory sub-group until 2018.

UK research infrastructure:

• Significant input in the development of the UK Research and Innovation Infrastructure Roadmap and Strategy on behalf of the British Library.

• Significant input into developing policy and rationale for infrastructure funding for arts and humanities on behalf of the AHRC.

Alan Turing Institute:

• Managed bidding processes for the Turing Institute establishment at the British Library.

• Managed physical moves and development of the Turing Institute within the Library from the outset until the Institute was open.

• Managing collaborative aspects of Turing/British Library relationship from the outset till present.

Digital research and infrastructure:

• Leading the British Library’s work on AI/machine learning.

• Responsible for the British Library Labs from 2019.

• Co-investigator on Living with Machines project – 2019 – present. The project is funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Strategic Priority Fund (via AHRC), as a multidisciplinary collaboration delivered by Alan Turing Institute, British Library and Universities of Cambridge, East Anglia, Exeter, Queen Mary University of London, and King’s College London.

• Heritage and Data: challenges and opportunities for the heritage sector – collaborative event and report between AHRC Heritage Priority Area, Heritage Futures research programme, Turing Institute and British Library (with Rodney Harrison, Hana Morel and Sefryn Penrose) 2017.
- EThOS, UK PhD theses service until 2016 – change of business model and re-launch as a permanent service.
12 Appendix B: Interview Questions

12.1 Group 1 (G1) – Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your research / research project(s) / research related responsibilities –
   - What are the objectives of your research?
   - Are there other individuals and organisations involved?
   - Who is the lead partner / PI?
   - Are you supervising / co-supervising PhD students?
   - How is your work funded?

2. Is your research related to specific discipline or is it interdisciplinary?

3. What will be the main outputs of your research?
   - Have you already published or expect to publish your research?
   - What other outputs do you expect to produce?

4. Is your research underpinning some other organisational activity? Which one?

5. Please describe the key benefits of your research.
   - Will your research have specific benefits for –
     - Society at large – nationally or internationally?
     - Specific communities?
     - Your organisation?

6. Does your research contribute to or respond to any specific governmental priorities/policies –
   - From central government?
   - From research funding bodies?
   - From your own institution?

7. Were these priorities/policies important for the design of your project? How did this influence your project?

8. Is research important in your organisation? Why does the organisation consider it important / not important?

9. Is research part of your organisation’s strategy? Please describe.

10. Are there any specific research-related policies in your organisation?
11. Do you take any steps to make the rest of organisation aware of your research?
   - If yes – what kind of steps?
   - If not – is there a reason why not?
12. Do you expect your organisation’s external audience to become aware of your research? Please describe.
13. Is there any formal reporting that you are required to do for your research?
14. What are the most important factors that make it possible for you to undertake your research?
15. What are the most significant barriers that you need to overcome in undertaking your research?
16. Is research the only or main part of your overall workload?
   - If not – what other work do you undertake? How much of your time is spent on research?
   - If not – how would you describe the importance of research in relation to your other work?
   - If yes – are there any advantages or disadvantages of being in the role focused predominantly on research?
   - If yes - do you expect research to continue being your primary focus in your future career?
17. What kind of improvements in government policies would help you to engage in research in a better way?
18. Do you collaborate with universities? Tell me about it.
19. How would you describe the difference between your research and university research (if there is any)?
20. Do you see any changing and emerging patterns of research that influence:
   - Your project?
   - Research in your organisation?
   - Research in general?
21. Has this provoked any other ideas and comments that I have not covered in my questions?
1. Can you tell me about your role in the organisation and how it relates to research?
2. Is research important in your organisation? Why do you consider it important / not important?
3. Is research part of your organisational strategy?
   o If yes - Please describe.
   o If not – is it owned and promoted in specific part(s) of organisation? Please describe.
4. What key benefits do you expect research to deliver in your organisation/department?
5. Is research underpinning or is it synergistic to other organisational activity? Please describe.
6. Are all or some of your audiences aware of your research activities? Please describe.
7. Does research in your organisation contribute to or respond to any specific governmental agenda/policy?
   o For central government?
   o For arms-length bodies?
8. Is your sponsor department aware and supportive of your research activity? Please describe.
9. Do you use your grant in aid to support your research activity in part, or fully? Please describe.
10. Is your Board aware and supportive of your research activity? Please describe.
11. What other government departments and arms-length bodies are aware and supportive of your research activity? Please describe.
12. Are there any research funders that are of particular strategic significance for your organisation? Please describe.
13. Do you have any other major, strategic partnerships with universities or other research organisations? Are they significant for your organisation? Please describe.
14. How would you describe the difference between your research and university research (if there is any)?
15. How would you describe your organisational research priorities?
16. How would you describe your organisational research capability?
   o Key strengths?
   o Areas for development?
17. Are there any specific research-related policies in your organisation/department? (to be excluded from the CEO interviews, too detailed)
18. Are there any corporate expectations, reporting or performance indicators related to research? (to be excluded from the CEO interviews, too detailed)
19. Do you take any steps to promote your research externally? Please describe. (to be excluded from the CEO interviews, too detailed)
20. Do you take any steps to enable your staff to undertake research? Please describe. (to be excluded from the CEO interviews, too detailed)
21. How is research integrated in your staff job roles?
22. Do you see any changing patterns in your organisation or external landscape that might affect future of research in your organisation? Please describe.
23. What kind of improvements in government policies would help you to engage in research in a better way?
24. Has this provoked any other ideas and comments that I have not covered in my questions?
12.3 Group 4 (G4) – Interview Questions

1. How is your organisation related to heritage organisations such as museums, galleries, libraries and archives? (e.g. as a governmental sponsor body, funder, key stakeholder group relevant for their policy delivery etc.)

2. Are you aware of research functions that many heritage organisations have? Please describe.

3. Do you have any specific remits or policies related to research work in heritage organisations? Please describe.
   - If yes – has this been actively considered by your organisation in the last two years (e.g. in terms of new policies, policy changes, funding streams, communications, new challenges and opportunities arising)?
   - If yes – how as this agenda changed in your organisation over time (e.g. less or more important, new expectations and policies, new programmes, collaborations etc.)?

4. Include any specific questions for bodies that have such remits, formed around specific policies and funding – to be established for each organisation on the case by case basis.

5. Do you consider research activity in heritage organisations as an important purpose of these organisations? Why?
   - If no – should there be any research activity in these organisations at all? If yes - what purpose should it have?

6. Do you know of any specific successful examples of research in heritage organisations? Please describe.

7. What should be the key benefits of research in heritage organisations for –
   - Society at large – nationally or internationally?
   - Specific communities?
   - Heritage organisations themselves?
   - Your organisation / department?
8. Is your organisation mandating or implementing any reporting of research benefits / impacts / outcomes / outputs? Please describe.

9. How would you describe the difference between your research and university research (if there is any)?

10. How would you describe current UK policy framework(s) that supports this activity?

11. Who would you say are the key governmental players that influence this agenda and in which way?

12. What type of policy changes could strengthen this agenda nationally and internationally?

13. What do you think institutions are doing well at the moment and what should change / improve?

14. Do you foresee any changes in your organisation or external landscape that might affect future of research in heritage organisation? Please describe.

15. Has this provoked any other ideas and comments that I have not covered in my questions?
Appendix C: Interview research information forms and interview consent forms

The forms shown in the Figures 19-24 were used to introduce the research aims and objectives and the interview process to the interviewees. Each interviewee received a research information sheet and a consent form prior to their interview. The forms were customised for different groups in order to explain the research from the perspective that is more relevant for their approach to this subject and their type of work.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (see page 83), the original intent was that some interviewees might agree to attribute and publish their contribution in full, and that these interviews would be provided as full transcripts in a separate Appendix. Seven participants agreed to full attribution and publication of their interview by signing the forms attached in this appendix. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, a decision has been made at a later stage to anonymise all interviews. One reason was a radical change in the government attitude to culture and the so-called culture wars, which put the employees of all government-funded cultural organisations in much more difficult position when commenting about government policy then it was the case when the interviews were first recorded.

I planned from the start that the interviewees from Group 1 will be anonymised as this was the only way to secure the interviews in this group. However, when looking at the final interviews, it was clear that the publication in full of the interviews from other groups would present the information in the way that is biased towards more senior participants and would exclude voices of staff that are directly involved in research activities. Therefore, all the interviews were anonymised, and none are published in full and with attribution. The selected information from all interviews is used throughout this study.
Information Sheet for PhD dissertation research (G1)

Dissertation title: Research functions in large heritage organisations: impact of the UK cultural and research policies on the institutional research strategies and practice

Researcher name: Vesna Maticevic
Contact details: maja.maticevic.15@ucl.ac.uk or maja.maticevic@bbl.uk
Supervisors’ names: Tim Schadla-Hall and Gabriel Moehsanka

Details of Study:
This research is investigating research functions in large, research-intensive heritage organisations such as national museums, libraries and archives. More specifically, it is looking at how public policy influences research in these organisations.

As a part of this study, I am looking to interview a range of staff, who work in large heritage organisations and are research active, to find out about key characteristics of their work.

The interview, which I am inviting you to participate in, will include questions about key characteristics and intended benefits of any research that you or your team are undertaking.

The interview will include questions regarding:
- Details of research that you are undertaking;
- How this activity funded, evaluated, recorded and disseminated;
- How your research fits with any other duties that your job entails;
- What is the intended benefit of this activity;
- How is your research different or similar to research done in universities;
- What internal and external factors help or hinder your research; and
- What kind of partnerships develop during your research.

At a later stage in my research, I will be talking to policy makers to find how they see research in heritage organisations.

Heritage sector is largely funded by government and nearly all its functions are effected by government legislation and policy, including its research strategies and capability. However, unlike research in universities, we know very little about research in heritage organisations.

Better knowledge about these issues is essential to ensure that there is a strong foundation for the future of research in heritage organisations. This will contribute to greater recognition of the role that heritage organisations have in advancing knowledge.

I will provide a short report for all participants after the initial data analysis is completed. On completion my PhD will be open access and available to all who are interested in this subject.

Taking part:
- The interview will be around one hour long and it will be recorded.
- If you decide not to take part, this will not disadvantage you in any way and you do not have to give a reason for your decision.
- If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.
- If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form.
- Your contribution will be fully anonymised and will not include your name, your job title or any other details that might lead to your identification (e.g. details of your research will be generalised in the way that cannot lead to your identification).
- It will be fully confidential who has taken part in this research and any note of your participation will be deleted once transcriptions have been completed.
- You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up to the point when it is transcribed for use in the final report. This will be done within three months of the interview taking place. At this stage recorded interviews will be transcribed (written up) and the tape will be wiped clear. As your participation will be anonymised during transcription, it will not be possible to withdraw your data after this point.
- All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

You are welcome to ask me at any time if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Figure 19 - Group 1 (G1) research information sheet
Informed Consent Form for PhD dissertation research (G1)

Dissertation title: Research functions in large heritage organisations: impact of the UK cultural and research policies on the institutional research strategies and practice

Researcher name: Maja Maricovic
Contact details: maja.maricovic.15@ucl.ac.uk or maja.maricovic@bl.uk

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Before you agree to take part, the person organising the research must explain the project to you.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Participant's Statement

I agree that:

- I have read the notes written above and the Information Sheet, and understand what the study involves.
- I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in this study.
- I understand that my participation will be recorded and I consent to the use of this material as part of the project.
- I understand that if I decide at any time that I no longer wish to take part in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw immediately.
- I understand that I may withdraw my data from the project at any time up until it is transcribed for use in the final report. This will be done within three months of the interview taking place. At this stage recorded interviews will be transcribed (written up) and the tape will be wiped clear. As my participation will be anonymised during transcription, it will not be possible to withdraw my data after this point.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.
- I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications.
- I understand that my non-personal, anonymised research data may be used by others for future research. I am assured that the confidentiality of my personal data will be upheld through the removal of identifiers.

Signature: Date:

Figure 20 - Group 1 (G1) interview consent form
Information Sheet for PhD dissertation research (G2/G3)

Dissertation title: Research functions in large heritage organisations: impact of the UK cultural and research policies on the institutional research strategies and practice

Researcher name: Maja Marinovic
Contact details: maja.marinovic.15@ucl.ac.uk or maja.marinovic@bl.uk
Supervisors’ names: Tim Schadde-Hall and Gabriela Moshanska

Details of Study:
This research is investigating research functions in large, research-intensive heritage organisations such as national museums, libraries and archives. More specifically, it is looking at how public policy influences research in these organisations.
Heritage sector is largely funded by government and nearly all its functions are affected by government legislation and policy, including its research strategies and capability. However, unlike research in universities, we know very little about interaction between government policy and research in heritage organisations.

I am aiming to answer two key research questions:
1. What constitutes the public policy framework that underpins research in heritage organisations in the UK, and what are the key messages arising from this body of policy?
2. How have heritage organisations responded to public policy during this period through their institutional strategies and through the different types of research projects that they undertake?

The interview, which I am inviting you to participate in, will include questions about key characteristics and intended benefits of research in your organisation.
The questions will explore:
• The role, value and key characteristics of research in your organisation;
• External and internal factors influencing research;
• Which current policy trends influence how you perceive and develop research;
• What is the role of partnerships in this activity; and
• Any current and future trends that you might be aware of.

Better knowledge about these issues is essential to ensure that there is a strong foundation for the future of research in heritage organisations. This will contribute to greater recognition of the role that heritage organisations have in advancing knowledge.

I will provide a short report for all participants after the initial data analysis is completed. On completion my PhD will be open access and available to all who are interested in this subject.

Taking part:
• The interview will be around one hour long and it will be recorded.
• If you decide not to take part, this will not disadvantage you in any way and you do not have to give a reason for your decision.
• If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.
• If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.
• You will be given a choice if you wish your contribution to be anonymised or attributed to you.
• If anonymised, your contributions will not include your name, your job title or any other details that might lead to your identification.
• If anonymised, any note of your participation will be deleted once transcriptions have been completed.
• If you prefer that your contribution is attributed, you will be able to read and comment on the transcript of the interview. At this stage you will be able to change your mind and ask for your contribution to be anonymised.
• You may withdraw your data from the project at any time prior to it being transcribed for use in the final report.
• This will be done within three months of the interview taking place. If your contribution is anonymised, this stage recorded interviews will be transcribed (written up) and the tape will be wiped clean.
• All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

You are welcome to ask me at any time if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

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Figure 21 - Groups 2 and 3 (G2, G3) research information sheet
Informed Consent Form for PhD dissertation research (G2, G3)

Dissertation title: Research functions in large heritage organisations: Impact of the UK cultural and research policies on the institutional research strategies and practice

Researcher name: Maja Mrnicovic
Contact details: maja.mrnicovic.15@ucl.ac.uk or maja.mrnicovic@bt.uk

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Before you agree to take part, the person organising the research must explain the project to you.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Participant’s Statement
I agree that:
- I have read the notes written above and the Information Sheet, and understand what the study involves.
- I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and agree to take part in this study.
- I understand that my participation will be recorded and I consent to use of this material as part of the project.
- I understand that if I decide at any time that I no longer wish to take part in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw immediately.
- I understand that I can make a choice for my interview to be anonymised or attributed by ticking the relevant box below.
- I understand that, if my interview is anonymised, my contributions will not include my name, job title or any other details that might lead to my identification. Only my organisation or other organisations that I mention will be identifiable. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications.
- I understand that, if my interview is attributed to me, I will be able to read and comment on the transcript of the interview. At this stage I will be able to change my mind and ask for my contribution to be anonymised.
- I understand that I may withdraw my data from the project at any time prior to it being transcribed for use in the final report. This will be done within three months of the interview taking place. If anonymised, at this stage recorded interviews will be transcribed (written up) and the tape will be wiped clean.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.
- I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I agree that my data may be used by others for future research.

Choose one of the following by ticking the appropriate box:
- I wish my data to be anonymised
- I agree that my interview will be attributed to me

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Figure 22 - Groups 2 and 3 (G2, G3) interview consent form
Information Sheet for PhD dissertation research (G4)

Dissertation title: Research functions in large heritage organisations: impact of the UK cultural and research policies on the institutional research strategies and practice

Researcher names: Maja Maricovic
Contact details: maja.maricovic.15@ucl.ac.uk or maja.maricovic@bl.uk
Supervisors' names: Tim Schede-Hall and Gabriel Mosheraska

Details of Study:
This research is investigating research functions in large, research-intensive heritage organisations such as national museums, libraries, and archives. This includes those areas where heritage organisations undertake equivalent to academic research in any discipline (e.g. archaeology, anthropology, history, chemistry, computer science) either in their own right or in collaboration with universities and other organisations.

More specifically, this research is looking at how public policy influences this type of research. Heritage sector is largely funded by government and nearly all its functions are affected by government policy, including its research strategies and capability. However, unlike research in universities, we know very little about interaction between government policy and research in heritage organisations. I am aiming to answer two key research questions:

1. What constitutes the public policy framework that underpins research in heritage organisations in the UK, and what are the key messages arising from this body of policy?
2. How have heritage organisations responded to public policy during this period through their institutional strategies and through the different types of research projects that they undertake?

I am looking to speak to policy makers from a range of government departments and arms-length bodies with remits in research, universities, culture, heritage and arts, in order to gain understanding of how policy makers view heritage organisations' role within the UK research landscape.

This interview, that I am inviting you to participate in, will have the following objectives:

- To explore how research in heritage organisations fits with the UK policy landscape in research, culture, heritage and arts.
- To explore if and how research in heritage organisations fits with the UK policy landscape in research, culture, heritage and arts.
- To explore if there are any specific policies that influence this agenda.
- To explore any key developments and trends that are affecting heritage organisations.
- To discuss perceptions of benefits or, depending on your viewpoint, lack of benefits of research in heritage organisations.

Better knowledge about these issues will shed new light on this area of policy, which has rarely been researched. It will help us understand any benefits of this activity to society and individual institutions. It will also help us define any specific issues that might be arising and are affecting research in heritage organisations.

I will provide a short report for all participants after the initial data analysis is completed. Once completed, my PhD will be open access and available to all who are interested in this subject.

Taking part:

- The interview will be around one hour long and will be recorded.
- If you decide not to take part, this will not disadvantage you in any way and you do not have to give a reason for your decision.
- If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.
- If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.
- You will be given a choice if you wish your contribution to be anonymised or attributed to you.
- If anonymised, your contributions will not include your name, your job title or any other details that might lead to your identification.
- If anonymised, any note of your participation will be deleted once transcriptions have been completed.
- If you prefer that your contribution is attributed, you will be able to read and comment on the transcript of the interview. At this stage you will be able to change your mind and ask for your contribution to be anonymised.
- You may withdraw your data from the project at any time prior to it being transcribed for use in the final report. This will be done within three months of the interview taking place. If your contribution is anonymised, at this stage recorded interviews will be transcribed (written up) and the tape will be wiped clear.
- All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
Informed Consent Form for PhD dissertation research (G4)

Dissertation title: Research functions in large heritage organisations: impact of the UK cultural and research policies on the institutional research strategies and practice

Researcher name: Maja Marusic
Contact details: maja.marusic.15@ucl.ac.uk or maja.marusic@ucl.ac.uk

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Before you agree to take part, the person organising the research must explain the project to you.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Participant’s Statement

I agree that:

- I have read the notes written above and the Information Sheet, and understand what the study involves.
- I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in this study.
- I understand that my participation will be recorded and I consent to use of this material as part of the project.
- I understand that if I decide at any time that I no longer wish to take part in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw immediately.
- I understand that I can make a choice for my interview to be anonymised or attributed by ticking the relevant box below.
- I understand that, if my interview is anonymised, my contributions will not include my name, job title or any other details that might lead to my identification. Only my organisation or other organisations that I mention will be identifiable. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications.
- I understand that, if my interview is attributed to me, I will be able to read and comment on the transcript of the interview. At this stage I will be able to change my mind and ask for my contribution to be anonymised.
- I understand that I may withdraw my data from the project at any time prior to it being transcribed for use in the final report. This will be done within three months of the interview taking place. If anonymised, at this stage recorded interviews will be transcribed (written up) and the tape will be wiped clear.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.
- I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I agree that my data may be used by others for future research.

Choose one of the following by ticking the appropriate box:

☐ I wish my data to be anonymised
☐ I agree that my interview will be attributed to me

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Figure 24 - Group 4 (G4) interview consent form
14 Appendix D: Interview data analysis: research characteristics, outputs, outcomes, collaborations and partnerships

14.1 Introduction

This Appendix brings together data from the interviews conducted for this study, focusing on the areas that were less relevant to the study’s focus on organisational and governmental influence on research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. The data collection and data analysis methodology, as well as the explanation of how this data is used in this study, are set up in Chapter 3 (see page 90). Figure 6 - Use of interview data in the document - shows the overall breakdown of the themes discussed in the interviews.

This Appendix includes the interview data regarding -

- Research characteristics in the UK national cultural organisations.
- Outputs and Outcomes.
- Collaborations and Partnerships.

These sections are intended to add detail to our knowledge of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations, which is an area that lacks contemporary data and understanding. As the interviews from this study resulted in a wealth of first-hand information provided by the practitioners currently employed in the relevant roles, this appendix intends to add a layer of detail that will enrich our understanding. It is focusing on presenting the interviewees’ views while preserving their anonymity.
14.2 Research characteristics

Figure 25 shows the sub-themes related to characteristics of research that were discussed in the interviews –
14.2.1 Collections-based and applied research

Nearly all interviewees included in this study, regardless of their institution or discipline, agreed that their research is collection-based. All six researchers from the Group 1, three out of four interviewees from the Group 2, as well as all four interviewees in Group 3 from V&A, Royal Botanic Garden Kew Historic England and a regional and university museum, described their research as collection-based. The interviewees defined the meaning of collection-based primarily as research that requires handling of collections during the research process, as explained by a scientist from the Natural History Museum -

My research is very much collections-based. It's experimental-based and dealing with the samples, that is very important to me. There are different ways of looking at planet formation. You can be a theoretical modeller, so you can get massive computers to generate what would happen, what would you expect to happen - the dusty disk, for example, how you expect it to evolve. So, that is one group of scientists and there is another group of scientists who are observational astronomers, and they look at the disks that are forming now, so they look out to the stars beyond ours to see how this planet forming processes are happening now in other star systems. And then, I like to think about meteorites as a third way of finding out about this, so that's like looking back into time of our own system. So, it is completely dependent on the meteorite collection. Absolutely, my work is collections-based. (Interview G1.02)

A British Museum curator described his collection-based research as follows:

The one thing that struck me when I was looking at the [major BM collection] is how, for example, [this collection] shows a representation of… a very classical representation. And what [this major collaborative project] is doing is looking at how different cultures represent God and belief. And so, I thought – well, it would be interesting to compare this sort of object with what's going on in [collections from another part of the world] because they are contemporary. You know, [they run is the same in period]… And also, [] I was interested in how cross-culturally
iconography develops [redacted], but also about how the vessels may be used in different contexts. (Interview G1.05)

There was another, somewhat circular characteristic of this research, as in many cases the new knowledge gained from the collection-based research is used to enable further collection development, interpretation, or preservation.

The interviewee from the Natural History Museum explained –

Scholarship, knowledge generation, whatever you want to call it, because it is inevitably bound up with the nature of the collection. So, the collection is a reflection of current knowledge at any one period. It also represents a resource for new knowledge. And, so it's a sort of a virtuous circle we operate in. And it's not simply - we go out and collect things because they fill gaps. It's because we have gone out to investigate something and we bring that material back as evidence, we then re-interrogate the collection, and as knowledge changes then the collection changes and the meaning of the collection changes. So, if you go back to the 17th/18th centuries, what people thought about the importance and significance and meaning of individual specimens was quite different from the way we think about them now. They might be the same specimens, but the understanding of what those mean in terms of reality of the outside world.

...So, they do better and more significant research as a result of having that proximity to the collection. They can drive the development of the collection. And that might be acquisition of new specimens, but it might also be reinterpretation and re-interrogation, and I see digitisation as an aspect of that. (Interview G2.02)

An interviewee from the British Museum felt that the Museum’s charitable purpose means that there must be a strong correlation between collections and research undertaken in the Museum -

Well, I would go as far as to say that the key responsibility of the Museum is its care of the collection, so that it is available for public benefit. So, the collection only exists for the use of curios and interested persons, therefore the only way according to our charitable purpose, in which we can even do research, is if it actually supports the care and
public benefit of the collection. Now that provides a very clear limit of what research is here to do. And it does actually mean, that there is, I think, there is research going in the Museum, which I would argue doesn’t actually support the core purpose of the Museum. (Interview G2.01)

Sometimes, but not always, the strong focus on the collections means that this research was defined as applied research. The interviewees tended to define their research as applied when it was related to the development of new services, policy, technological innovation, conservation, or some kind of direct institutional or industry impact. The interviewees from the British Library, Royal Botanical Garden Kew, and Historic England, were more likely to emphasise the applied nature of their research than the interviewees from the British Museum, Natural History Museum and V&A.

An interviewee from the British Library said -

_We mostly do applied research. I think that is part of the difference, and I think that is appropriate for us. We should be doing the research that, to a large extent, will impact the services we can provide in five-ten years. So, I think that is a big difference._ (Interview G1.01)

An interviewee from the Historic England said about their research -

_It's applied research. It's not fanciful, do you know what I mean? It's not someone's PhD because they're interested in some element that is furthering our understanding. We're very much driven by the fact that the research supports functioning, supports advice, supports policy making. But within that, it could also be for example, internally, it could be that we need to disseminate our research better, we need to engage new audiences. How do you do that? We need to have some research to understand how this group, this group and this group take information, use information. ...We're heavily involved in scientific dating for example, so there could be new ways of looking at carbon-14 dating for pottery or whatever. So, a project and some research aim is we need to improve this. It could be development of innovation or innovative techniques that will promote better best practice, better dating. So yes, there are ways of developing techniques, developing new ways of interpretation, but there_
is also a lot of the research that is actually supporting policy making, informing evidence basis. (Interview G3.01)

An interviewee from the Royal Botanic Garden Kew said -

So, it's not pure academic research and I don't think it should be because I think the universities can do that very well. I think the fact that we have living plants and living collections, as well as vivarium collections and other things that a university without a botanic garden doesn't have, gives us the opportunity to do collections-based research that really could have an impact with farmers, with foresters, with national park managers, with local communities, all of those things. (Interview G3.02)

However, it was also pointed out that the distinction between blue sky and applied research sometimes changed over time as in the example from the British Library -

I have been particularly interested in research that enables the British Library to further its services in enabling people to make innovative use of digital content. So, this is typically relatively applied research. Not always, but relatively applied research. I would say that digital preservation work started out as quite blue-sky-ish research and then became increasingly applied as we made progress and is now more in the context of operational services than it is in the context of research activity. (Interview G1.01)

On the other hand, the interviewees from the British Museum, V&A and Natural History Museum, as well as one interviewee from the British Library emphasised that collection-based does not necessarily mean that research is applied. In this example an interviewee from the British Museum describes collection-based research as being curiosity driven –

I would probably say it's largely more curiosity driven. The majority of the projects that we run, and we have an annual Science Plan that we review and update, we have an annual process of inviting curators to bring forward projects. So, it's largely curiosity driven. … We have the collection, there are questions of archaeological or historical value that we want to develop and understand from the collection. We have a smaller number of projects that are conservation driven, so they might be
to do with a deterioration of enamel in an object, for example, and what are the best conditions to stabilise them and to store and display those objects. But I would put those in the minority. (Interview G1.06)

Research was linked to the acquisition of new objects – from being able to identify an object, to understanding how it fits with the existing collections in their own institution and in relation to other collections, to its research potential, display potential, ethical considerations, preservation issues and its cost (Interviews G1.04; G1.05). This was not seen as necessarily being applied. For example, acquisitions could be linked to curator’s own research interests, which could have much broader research questions in mind -

I'm quite interested in broken objects. I'm interested in objects that were deliberately broken [redacted], so I may acquire it because I'm interested in that topic and because it is interesting, I think, from the research perspective. (Interview G1.05)

In some instances, the interviewees described their collection-based approach as something that they were aware was not in line with contemporary academic approaches, even though many noted that this has been changing in recent times. We can see it in this example referring to archaeology -

A lot of archaeological departments when I was studying, when I was doing my PhD, that was back in the mid 90s, they did not really do a lot with material culture. They were more interested in the landscape archaeology, and archaeological theory, and you know, the links between archaeology and anthropology, and things like that. So, [Director of my university department, when I was studying] was a world archaeology person, he wasn’t interested in things such as materials. So, a lot of university departments just did not rally have people who had much interest or specialism in objects. There was much more focus in the Museum. And there is, actually, if you are interested, there is a paper by [a university professor], who [] was basically criticising research in museums, and saying that we tend to approach things in a way that does not take into account other models of looking at material. And he caused quite a lot of upset with my predecessors because they felt he was speaking out of turn, because he never picked up an object. You know. How can you discuss material if you’ve actually never physically handled
material? So that was interesting, but that did at least initiate more of a dialogue about how material culture should be looked at. (Interview G1.05)

The observed shift away from the object is in line with the trends observed in literature, which in many cases emphasises the contested status of museum objects, such as in this example -

*The status of the object has become increasingly contested in museological debates. This is certainly clear in exhibitions, where constructivist educational approaches shift attention away from the object to the audience, to language, and to representation. If, in fact, what we are doing is telling stories and creating experiences, it follows that we may find more effective ways of telling them than with the objects themselves.* (Reid & Naylor 2005: 361)

The approaches marginalising the importance of objects in research, were not popular with the interviewees. While the importance of storytelling was welcomed, it was not seen as something that should take away focus from objects. The interviewees made a distinction between object-illustrated and object-driven research, stressing the importance of the latter for their own practice (Interviews G1.03; G1.05). The importance of handling objects in the process of research was emphasised by nearly everyone (Interviews G1.02; G1.03, G1.04, G1.05, G1.06). The emphasis on theoretical approaches in academic research often caused a level of frustration, as in the example below -

*Sometime when I go to conferences and sit where I sit and listen to someone talking theoretically about material, I find myself getting quite annoyed because they don’t know what they are talking about because they actually never touched this material. And I am not being prejudiced against them in that sense, but because they come from such theoretical base… it is hard to explain, but there is something about actually physically handling the material, which does make you think differently about it. There is no doubt about that.* (Interview G1.05)

A retired interviewee from the British Museum offered a somewhat longer-term perspective on this subject –
The nature of research changes – doesn’t it? So, one time we are doing broad social questions and the next time we are doing the nitty-gritty of which books are acquired by the Royal Library in 1615. I have been around for long now, so it sorts of goes in cycles. Doesn’t it? Like - studying objects in museums, object-based research, artefacts research – it goes out of fashion and then it comes back again. People discover that actually looking at the objects tells you something about theory and vice versa. (Interview G2.04)

14.2.2 Changing curatorial and scientific landscape

Quite a lot has been written about the change in the nature of curatorial roles due to the rise in managerialism (Duffy 2017), or due to the new emphasis on public-facing functions (Baloffet et al. 2014), or the lack of funding for research (Anderson 2005). Many have tried to define curatorial types of knowledge production and its characteristics. Sheikh (2019:97) describes curatorial role as shifting between two modes that are both complementary and conflicting – ‘the idea of research in an academic sense, and the idea of practice in a professional sense’. He also tries to unite these apparent dichotomies -

Rather, we are dealing with different concepts of the curatorial, and questions of what constitutes research and public engagement, as most public institutions today need to be not only spectacular, and think of audiences and constituencies in quantitative ways, they also need to be research based, and educational, thinking of their audiences and constituencies in qualitative ways. (Sheikh 2019: 98)

There is no doubt that in the UK national cultural organisations, curatorial roles retain research as one of their key responsibilities, even in the environments where curators are apparently not meant to be doing research, as, for example, at the Natural History Museum (Interviews G1.02; G1.04; G2.02) –

And in the Science Group we are divided as well into researchers and curators. So, I’m a researcher which means I get to spend most of my time doing research. But then half of the Science Group are curators, so their job is to look after the collections, and they do some research, but
it’s much more limited and tends to involve classifying material on the collections and that sort of thing. (Interview G1.02)

Chapter 4 (see page 111) discusses in more detail the issue of research being split or integrated with the curatorial roles.

What is also clear is that there is not one definition what curatorial roles entail, and even in the single organisations, there are many different types of curators – those who are academic and those who are not, those who are more interested in public engagement and those who prefer to stay behind the scenes, those who are leading experts in very specific and narrow fields, and those who are generalists in a very broad disciplinary field.

An interviewee from the British Library said –

Well, there is no two curators that do the same curatorial job. Right? So, in a fairly generic style curators might select items for the collection and they might then be responsible for cataloguing those at times when they come in, or they might responsible for working with cataloguers or in the reading room. They might be responsible for setting up and running digitisation projects or international collaborations, they might be curating exhibitions, they might be writing blogs. Research is a tricky one because, if you ask some people, research… you have to do research to select books. And you do, but I wouldn’t say that’s academic research in the kind of way I’ve been talking about. You know, you have to do research to write a blog, but I wouldn't describe somebody who'd written five blogs last year as research active. They might be, but if the blogs are the only output then maybe they need some mentoring on how to present their research outputs. But, it's so different curator to curator. (Interview G1.03)

The interviews conducted for this study did not offer a unified definition of curatorial role and its future development, instead they offered a list of potential future directions. In some areas there was a trend towards more disciplinary specialisation (Interview G1.02), in others the interviewees indicated preference for more generalist roles (Interview G1.06). The requirements included many other, sometimes opposing requirements, at times voiced by the same interviewee – for example - to have more research publications with high rankings.
and to engage in more public facing communications; or - to develop career structures that are transferrable to academic settings and those that are deliberately different to those in academic environment, or - to retain curatorial link with acquisition and care of objects and to move away from these traditional curatorial functions towards storytelling and interpretation based roles, etc. Based on this, it seems that we are looking at the continuing change of curatorial roles, and many different answers as to what curator is.

This example from the British Museum shows one potential trajectory for these changes -

*In the past the curator was responsible for the collection, but we changed that in the last three or four years, so now we have the collections department and the registrar. We never had the registrar here until two or three years ago. So, that is redefining the purpose of the job. So, curator is not any longer the person that is responsible for the collection and the care of the collection. Their job is primarily content provider. Their job is research and knowledge. So, their job is to know what is in the collection, to register the collection, to upgrade the information about the collection, to research the collection, and to provide the content for exhibitions, radio series etc. (Interview G2.01)*

On the other hand, another interviewee from the British Museum offered a description of his work, which was much longer-term, and knitted together several generations of curators working on a major collection -

*So, I think that when I was appointed, I was already kind of associated with this set of materials. The Museum also was conscious of the fact that [this collection] never had a full treatment. It had some research done on it, but it’s never really been properly published which I think was, I don’t think embarrassment is the right word, but it was certainly seen as a lacuna in the Museum’s portfolio of research. And, to some extent it is also to do with circumstance, so there are two predecessors who may have done publication. One [of them] I think, he always wanted to do a full treatment, but he never quite got around to it, but he did publish a short introduction to [the collection back in the 1970s]. So, he planned to do something, but it never quite happened, and then his successor, also may have considered doing something, but she then got involved with*
another collection, which was [discovered at the time]. Because [this new collection] arrived at the Museum and had such a huge range of material, I think her focus shifted to [this], and so she really spent the remainder her career finalising that work. In fact, she did not publish it until after she retired, which might demonstrate something of the fact that it’s very hard actually during a normal curatorial time to do the research needed on something like this. So, that really explains why I ended up doing it, because it has been in the Museum [for several decades], which is a very long time. The other thing to say is that, there are other very high-profile [collections of this type] in other places which had received very comprehensive study and publication. (Interview G1.05)

Curatorial research retains its close links with acquisition of materials –

I have to justify the acquisition because it costs money, but often those of sorts are not very… they don’t cost very much because they are not attractive on the antiquities market [ ]. So, we have to weigh up research potential, display potential, costs and preservation, I suppose, the importance of preservation of that material in a longer-term sense. So, these are the things you are thinking of when you acquire objects. This is going to be different to, let say, my colleague [ ] who deals with modern collections, because she is acquiring, say, she is acquiring [these collections because she is interested because these traditions of making these materials is dying out, so she’s got completely different set of reasons behind her acquisition than I would have. Preservation for different reason entirely, which is preservation of folk traditions. And so. But that is still research obviously. Because then you have to research, well, how do those things fit together. (Interview G1.05)

In another example from the Natural History Museum -

But what we rely on those research scientists to do is not only to pull value out of the collection, but to push the value into the collection. So, their discoveries, their acquisitions, work in terms of annotation and data that go with it, actually change the meaning of the collection, so that it better represents the outside world. It represents reality. And so, you could say - as an infrastructure the collection is a model of reality. (Interview G2.02)
Research is also often informed by urgent conservation requirements, which often dictate what is researched and when. The needs of collection often inform the arising priorities, and often change them in the way that is prioritised over individual choice and research interests.

*I guess that the priorities in a museum sense for things like that - the first and foremost is preservation of material and conservation of material. So, the first, say, could be up to five ten after the acquisition, the focus is much more on conservation work and so on, not so much the objects themselves. I mean, my colleague, who’s recently retired, he acquired [this collection] which counts as religious objects, that came to the Museum the early 2000s, very fragmentary, very broken, requiring many, many years of painstaking conservation and scientific work to reconstruct. So, he was unable to do the primary research on what the objects were and their significance and their context until that process have been gone through. (Interview G1.05)*

The interviews completed for this study emphasised the diversity of roles doing research, meaning that is not just curators, but all kind of different roles that are contributing to research functions in the UK national cultural organisations – scientists, librarians, archivists, data scientists, research software engineers, PhD students, postdocs, academic partners, independent researchers, and many others.

The UK national cultural organisations support a diversity of scientific research – from the collection-based research in natural history museums, to heritage science in historical museums and galleries, to data science increasingly present in many different types of institution. Within this broad scientific scope, we have, on one end of the scale, scientists at the Natural History Museum, who, apart from their work being collection-based, do not see much difference between their role and similar roles in universities –

*So, we have a research expectation which are based mostly on publications and also on grant income. So, grant income is probably really the most important thing at the moment. And it’s also based on supervising and training students and little bit on public engagement as well. (Interview G1.02)*
On the other, we have scientists in the British Museum explaining their research role as hugely dependent on curatorial and conservation needs of the institution, as well as the institutional link with the broader scientific world -

*I think, [value] is the fact that you can have regular face-to-face interaction with the objects, with the curators. It is that dynamic, which I think is absolutely vital. So, people who can assist curators and assist conservators can support those individuals to develop research projects, can in part help to deliver those research projects, or can act as conduits to the wider research infrastructure in the universities and other research institutes. So, I see scientists… I think the days have gone where a scientific team, even one that is relatively large such as within the British Museum, can answer all the questions that are emerging from curators and the collections. They go to conferences, they read the latest papers, the latest research articles, and so on. So, there's a lot going on out there, and there is no way that a relatively small science group can respond to all of those questions, but we can help to translate the major science, the big science that's going on in the universities with the world class facilities. For example, ancient DNA would be one example, proteomics - a study of protein sequences that involves really significant laboratory infrastructure, technicians, bio-informatics to support that. I can't see that happening in many museums, again, outside of the Natural History Museum in the UK, and one or two others, the History of Natural History in Copenhagen, for example. But it won't happen in many. So, smaller science groups like us have to act as conduits between that really big science infrastructure and the needs of curators and conservators. And I would argue that, on that basis, it's very important to retain science within museum structure itself. It would be a very difficult, very complex process to get those projects off the ground if we didn't have a core group of scientists in the Museum. (Interview G1:06)

However, the links between different roles in the institutions are not always straightforward. In particular, the contribution of different types of research-active specialists remains undervalued, as expressed by one of the interviewees describing a disconnect between horticulturalists and scientists in the UK research-active botanic gardens -
I think part of it is that horticulturalists also are not expected to be as rigorous as scientists. They don't necessarily write things down. They don't record their knowledge in the same way. They're very much, kind of, different disciplines. And we don't see that problem in other more enlightened parts of the world. So, it's very much an issue in Europe I would say. But in Australia, for example, the horts work closely with the scientists. Particularly on conservation and so on. South Africa is the same. In the US, in a number of gardens there, there's a much stronger connection there and less of a divide. (Interview G3.02)

The similar issues can be identified in other settings – for example, in relation to engineering and technical roles that are underpinning digital research (Ahnert et. al. 2023), or in relation to the role of archivists and librarians, not just in enabling access to information, but in undertaking essential research in how research information landscape can continue to evolve in the age of information profusion and continuing technological change (Baker & Ellis ed. 2021). These findings indicate that there is a need to re-define and broaden the range of roles involved in research in UK cultural organisations, including more understanding of the role played by scientists, librarians, archivists, different types of technology and digital professionals, and specialist professions such as horticulturalists.

The limitation of this study is that it did not address the issues of curatorial activism engaging with feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, anti-racism and class inequality, as well as the role of research in understanding the issues related to colonial collecting, interpretation, social and economic injustice. It also did not look into instances of ‘the integrated scholarship and practice that occur when museums and source communities engage in collaborative research’ (Krmpotich & Peers 2011), nor the issues of curatorial authority and power (Tuhiwai Smith 2012), and how contemporary research practices might be evolving in respect to these issues. However, this study has uncovered the instances of the emerging change in both curatorial and institutional practice in the relation to some of these issues. For example, the British Library’s staff-led action plan for race equality – *Enacting Change: An Action Plan for Race Equality at the British Library* (Brown & Rajukumar 2022) – includes a range of action that, if implemented, would lead to further organisational change in curatorial practice. For example, this includes an intent to address the issues of race in relation to collection metadata and
We will develop more flexible subject terminologies and discovery approaches to address issues of outdated and inappropriate language; to surface under-described and undiscoverable collections; and to respect access protocols of culturally sensitive heritage. We will improve discovery of marginalised experiences in the collection through the creation of guides, finding aids, blogs, social media, as well as increased, targeted, and fuller cataloguing. (Brown & Rajukumar 2022: 11)

We will ensure any newly appointed and current collections and curatorial roles have the resource to deliver relevant race equality objectives within their areas and are fully supported in a Library wide strategy which will inform our future collecting and interpretation of collections. (Brown & Rajukumar 2022: 12)

Overall, whether it is dealing with race inequalities and colonial legacies, or integrating feminism and LGBTQ identities, these issues remain insufficiently addressed by the institutions. These developments are only starting to impact institutions, and more work will be needed before they are fully integrated with institutional research functions.
14.2.3 Enabling research by others

During the past debates about research functions in the UK national cultural institutions, there were instances where there was a distinction made between institutional work that enables research by others, as opposed to research done by curators and other staff in their own right (Cossons 1991). In this study we have already seen that in some institutions, especially at the British Library (see page 129), the interviewees felt that the institution is not very good at defining some of these differences and in supporting them adequately (Interviews G1.01; G1.03). Another important finding from the interviews is that the majority of interviewees perceived their own research as directly connected to supporting research done by others.

For example, digital research at the British Library was described in the context of deepening the Library’s ‘understanding how researchers are trying to use our digital content’ in order to make appropriate changes and enable others to do things (Interview G1.01). In all three institutions interviewed in Group 1, the interviewees described how their expertise, developed through their own research, is important in helping others (Interviews G1.01; G1.02; G1.03; G1.04; G1.05), as in these Natural History Museum examples –

Well, we have a world community of scientists who are coming to access the collection. We have up to 300 scientists a year coming to work here, and we would give them access to the collection, providing an expert backbone for their research. Very often, because the collection has been accumulated over period of 300 years, we will find that the labels need interpretation, so one of the jobs of the curator here is to help the scientific community with interpreting the collection. Very often you will get a young researcher from anywhere in the world, who is very expert in a group of [organisms], but might not be experienced in interpreting, you know old geographical localities, or old handwritings, or things like that, so there is an interpretative function to what we do. Also, we have a general overview of not only the collections, but what is included within the collections, but also the organisms themselves, so generally we would be the best people around to talk about what a particular [organism] is likely to be. When you get 400,000 possibilities, if somebody brings in a potential [type of organism], or something like that,
then, the first thing we will do is tell them what the group it belongs to, so that they can begin to look at the right places. (Interview G1.04)

So, it means that we have around… between eight and ten thousand scientific visitors a year, coming in, using our collection. We make loans. We are loaning probably thirty to fifty thousand specimens a year abroad, often by post. So, put the collection in the post and send it to different countries, not if it is really rare or valuable, but it means that you have a big mobility of people, data, specimens, and this represents, again, a distributed infrastructure. But in itself, for what is here, we also have our labs. (Interview G2.02)

An interviewee from the British Museum described how dealing with requests of other researchers forms a part of his curatorial role -

And it takes up a lot of time. So, I might receive a request from a college in a university - I want to look at [these collections]. Please make these available to me. It could take me… It could take the whole day or even two days just putting together the information needed on those materials, organising access - because they might be at three different sites. So, that person might come to the Museum one day and then they may go to two other sites on different days, and they may uncover some problems with the documentation, so there might be… So, all those things fall on me or any other curator responsible to deal with that material, to deal with those problems. But we feel that it's very important to facilitate those requests. However, having said that, if an undergraduate student said - I want to examine [this major collection], those pieces on display, and I want you to take them off the display to look at them. We will probably say – No. Because that material has been researched and published. What do they need that they cannot get from the published sources? A university professor making the same request, we are more likely to say yes, because they probably have research questions. (Interview G1.05)

The British Library is difficult to compare with other institutions in this study to this respect. Being a library, its key organisational activity is supporting large numbers of researchers onsite and online. It is, therefore, expected that the British Library's research was highly related to enabling research done by others. An interviewee from the British Library emphasised -
… the kind of research that we do, it often has an enabling property because of the kind of institution that we are. We are enabling others to do things. (Interview G1.01)

This interviewee especially emphasised the importance of the Library’s research to advance new uses of digital content -

*We’ve done a lot work in the context of the British Library Labs project to deepen our understanding how researchers are trying to use our digital content, and that’s really helped make a quite profound change. I hope it’s profound and lasting change in the way that the folks developing those systems think about what end users are trying to do.*

…*We do a lot of engagement actually with the research community raising awareness about what they could do now, as well as helping us to learn about what they want to do, and that’s part of that research activity of deepening understanding of trends and practices in research. So, this year we touched over seven hundred researchers in direct way. We did something like twenty-five events, mostly half-day to one day, focused on digital research.* (Interview G1.01)

In some instances, specific collections and institutional expertise formed a national or an international hub for certain types of research, where an institution might provide support for an entire discipline, such as in this example, also from the Natural History Museum -

*So, lots of universities work in [this discipline], and we work with all of them. We collaborate with all of them. We supply the samples that they need, to all of them. We know what they are all doing. So, I feel we are really at the heart of the country’s [discipline name redacted] research. If we suddenly evaporated or something, I think that would be devastating for other people who work in [this discipline] in the country.* (Interview G1.02)

**14.2.4 Disciplinary and interdisciplinary trends**

Research that takes place in cultural organisations frequently has an uneasy relationship with their nearest academic discipline, especially with the
academic tendency to move in and out of interest in objects, spend decades favouring theoretical research, or just change at a pace that is not possible to follow when you have to care for physical collections, especially at scale. However, the interviews revealed that many research trends at the UK national cultural institutions are following disciplinary arrangements in a way that is more aligned to the mainstream disciplines than it was the case previously - for example, in the case of life sciences at the Natural History Museum (Interview G2.02), or data science at the British Library (Interview G1.01). This choice is often related to government policies, funding availability and national science priorities, as expressed by the interviewee from Natural History Museum -

So, our structure has continued to shift. So, structure is not really strategic. So that is partly because the collections are just there. They make sense in in terms of division between Life Science and Earth Sciences. So, we used to have lots more departments and we merged them all… We’ve experimented with different ways of delivering strategic capability. Sometimes that will be short term. You would say – well, okay, there’s a new question here. You can look at the government policy – so, what’s government worried about. Is it interested in climate change, or biodiversity? Or is it interested in sources of rare minerals? Is it interested in… there are all sorts of things you could identify. And is there a funding opportunity that goes with that? So, can our collection and our expertise be brought to bear on that issue which is of a key importance for society. (Interview G2.02)

The issue of disciplinary changes and the advancement of science has been especially keenly felt in natural history museums, leading to the major changes in the direction of their research, marked by the crisis in traditional taxonomic research and the rise of systematic biology and life sciences in natural museum settings. This change is explored in the Natural History Museum case study in Chapter 8 (see page 314), as this dynamic between changing science and collections-based research is crucial for better understanding the present and the future of research functions in the UK national cultural organisations. The same dynamic has been noted by an interviewee from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew -
So that's another complication, is the fact that in science we've moved away from whole organism biology to molecular biology and so on, and I don't think botanic gardens have moved with the curricula. And if you look at the history of botanic gardens in Europe, for example, they started out as physic gardens, very much. So, Chelsea Physic Garden is an example of that, so around medicinal plants and so on. And then in the days of Empire, very much around economic botany, coffee, tea and all the major commodities came through botanic gardens. And the really for the last century or more it's been the science of taxonomy, the science of naming plants and classifying them. That's a finite task and, you know, we know there are 370,000 plant species in the world, we're perhaps coming to the end of the taxonomic age and there is a big question what next and how do we link in our collections, skills, data, you know, with a modern-day research. And how do we, particularly, define our own niche, which I think can be challenging. I'm very clear about what our niche is, but not everyone is. (Interview G3.02)

Another significant theme arising from the interviews was the theme of interdisciplinarity, which was felt to be an integral feature of research in cultural organisations. As in all debates on interdisciplinarity, this caused a level of frustration in terms of difficulties regarding interdisciplinary careers, publication and funding venues, as interdisciplinary research seems to ‘fall between the cracks’ (Interviews G1.02; G1.03). The interviewees attempted to explain the importance of interdisciplinarity for their research, as in this example from the British Museum science team -

It is quite difficult to consider it in disciplinary terms. It can include chemistry, biology and physics applied to objects, to materials in the Museum collection, there are eight million objects in the Museum’s collection, and it ranges from stone to metals and ceramics and glass, to organic materials - wood and paper, plant remains of all types and descriptions, to modern materials such as modern synthetic materials such as plastics. So, in some regards the scientists have to be generalists to be able to respond to the complexity of the Museum collection, so we are here to help preserve the collection, as well as to research and then to use the collection. (Interview G1.06)
Others went as far as to define their work and research set up in the way that makes disciplines or conventional interdisciplinarity irrelevant, like in this example from the British Library -

There’s linguists, there’s art historians, there’s people who are doing kind of cultural studies, and so it does make me laugh a bit when people get really overexcited about interdisciplinarity because actually when you deal with a collection that’s your starting point, and disciplines become not irrelevant, but … they kind of fade into the background in a really interesting way, which sometimes makes it quite hard to think about shaping projects in the ways that universities understand them because we just don’t have that kind of internal structure, and so I think that’s one of the things that I really like about doing research in a heritage organization.

…And the interdisciplinarity point - I think, the challenge there is by articulating… we’re almost like post-disciplinary because we don't organize ourselves like that. So, it’s about working out how we fit in interdisciplinary teams in the right way, and kind of links to the point before about object-driven research rather than object-illustrated research. So, how we articulate… how the kind of research we do is distinctive and interesting and part of that mix. (Interview G1.03)

In the institutions concerned primarily with humanities, there was a worry regarding the ways in which humanities were pushed away from the governmental and university priorities -

I think one thing that is difficult to work out how it will impact us, but it… there's a push away from the humanities into things that deliver science, medicine, engineering, kind of benefits that broadly can be described as industrial benefit. And I think that isn't just a humanities problem, it's also a fundamental basic science problem – like, how do you do research that doesn't immediately lead to economic benefit for the country. I think, at the moment, the AHRC are still funding that kind of stuff, but if it all gets rolled into one big mega Research Council, then that might be quite difficult. (Interview G1.03)

Humanities disciplines were important to all organisations, including the
Natural History Museum (Interview G1.04). However, a range of disciplines in all institutions included a wide range of disciplinary areas in both humanities and sciences – history, digital humanities, archaeology, biology, chemistry, climate science, planetary sciences, languages, linguistics, design, plant sciences, zoology - to mention just a few. One positive feature of the interviews was that the interviewees were ready to engage with the issues of change in their disciplinary fields, and attempt to define them on their own terms, with confidence to pose research questions and form projects that recognised the characteristics of their own research environment, even if that meant challenging the traditional boundaries of their discipline.

14.2.5 Digital research

One significant feature of the current research in the UK national cultural organisation is the rise of digital research. It is a complex area that encompasses digitisation of collections, creation of new digital infrastructures, digital humanities, open data, data science, and many other aspects of research in the areas where digital developments have created new research possibilities (Harrison et. al. 2017; Reimer 2018, Baker & Ellis 2021; Ahnert et. al. 2023). As well as being relevant for research, digital technologies offer new opportunities for development of other institutional functions – from exhibitions and learning to commercial activities. This makes the area of digital developments even more complex, as inevitably the institutions are confronted with a range of possibilities that are not always harmoniously sitting with each other. Just to mention as an example a dilemma whether to commercially licence digital collections or to make them open (Wallace 2022: 4-5).

Inevitably, different institutions are forming different strategies in relation to their digital research. At the British Library and the Natural History Museum digital research featured at the top of priority lists (Interviews G1.01; G02; G1.03; G2.02; G2.03), while the interviewees from the British Museum did not tend to emphasise this area as the highest priority.

At the British Library there is well-established research in the area of digital humanities -
So, that’s been about deepening our understanding of how researchers are starting to use digital content and data. Using digital collections as data, I think. … And I think we really deepened our understanding. We are now closer to the point where we think about offering services in that space. We worked with probably, I’m guessing, hundred plus researchers over four years. You know, the whole bunch of different disciplines. So, typically mostly humanities, arts and humanities disciplines, a lot of them in history, but also artists, and using all sorts of different types of content.

…There has been a set of projects like one on Victorian imagery, that we contributed to and not led. So, they study Victorian drawings and images, and the changes in the way that’s used to communicate ideas and things like that. We did a lovely project on automated musicology, which involved the application of quite sophisticated computational techniques and hardware, in fact, to recorded audio material, digitised recorded audio material, to do things like detect instrumentation and other musicological relevant features from the raw data. And those projects are ones from quite a big set actually that were enabled by the work that we did with the Labs in both deepening our understanding and building up connections. It has enabled us to then launch the whole bunch of additional projects. (Interview G1.01)

At both the British Library and the Natural History Museum there was an emphasis on open data and new types of research that become possible in open data environments. The interviewee from the Natural History Museum described it as follows -

*Digitisation and open data are really important. So, we have an open by default policy for research collections information. There are some caveats on that, but what we’re trying to do there is - we recognise that those data are a product of curation and research, so of our science as a whole. We have specialist data staff who have developed that, so informaticians – would that be a word? - so, what we are interested in there is releasing data that we have to the outside world. It is on the zero license. So, we’re just saying anybody can use it for whatever purpose. Take the whole thing if you want to. Go and use it. (Interview G2.02)*
While somewhat earlier in the development of open data service, its importance has also been noted by an interviewee at the British Museum -

*I think the institutions have to become more open. It's a big struggle and we have to fund it. So, we have major developments on the way in terms of digital preservation and archiving, research data management and the challenges of making that data available, findings of our research. So, it's a really big question for us. So, we are having regular meetings with our Information Services team, we’re developing a new digital preservation strategy. For a part of that we’re talking to the British Library.* (Interview G1.06)

Many of the projects cited were international in nature, such as the British Library’s line of collaborative projects on data identifiers - DataCite, Thor and Odin (Interview G1.01), which were developed as European and world-wide collaborations. The international aspect of digital technologies meant that this research was lending itself to international approaches to achieve the necessary scale and impact, often mirroring a scope of governmental digital policies. An interviewee from the British Library positioned his projects in relation to European, at the time including the UK, policies related to single digital market -

*To some extent you can view some of work that we’ve done in services to support researchers working with digital material as really responding to a wide range of government initiatives both in the UK and across Europe, fostering digital research and looking towards a single digital market and all these sorts of things, so there is, if I look at the proposals and the work that has been done, it’s often a little bit framed in that context.* (Interview G1.01)

Digital research has offered the institutions new opportunities for larger scale collaborative projects and new ways to experiment with digital infrastructures. The British Library interviewee referred to the Library’s partnership with Alan Turing Institute as significant for the institution’s future -

*…That’s why the arrival of the Alan Turing Institute here was a really positive sign about how we seem to be influential and also innovative, and underpinning things. So, I think it's really great that the Institute for data science is here in the national library. That was not necessarily a*
given. It shows how we can work collaboratively with universities and then, you know, it references our convening power. (Interview G2.03)

Another interviewee from the British Library listed a range of other partnerships relevant for the Library’s digital research -

And you see that in the nature of collaboration where you’ve got, yes libraries and archives, but also technical organisations, Microsoft, or IBM, or specialist organisations like AIT – Austrian Institute of Technology… or, disciplinary focused organisations like European Bio Informatics Institute, or CERN, or PANGAEA, which is a current project partner in the environmental sciences. (Interview G1.01)

Many of these projects were utilising the institutional data holdings, and deploying machine learning and AI methodologies, such as in the example of the Living with Machines project at the British Library (Beelen et al. 2022). Harrison et al. (2017: 2) have identified a rise in both digitised and born-digital content at scale in heritage settings, including that this data provides a ‘foundation for new research into both historical (natural and cultural) phenomena and contemporary life’. However, they also note that –

Data introduces new levels of uncertainty and bias and creates unprecedented levels of profusion that requires expert judgement deployed alongside algorithms, statistical methods and machine learning. (Harrison et al. 2017: 10)

While digital research tends bot be expensive and complex to develop, there is no doubt that this fast-developing area of research will be at the forefront of the future institutional developments.

14.2.6 Citizen science and community collaborations

Another growing area relevant to research functions of the UK national cultural organisations is citizen science and a range of projects enabling co-creation with different communities. The interviewees described a range of such projects already underway and indicated that there is a likelihood of further developments in this area -
The other area is citizen science. And citizen science is important because it means that you can be virtual. So, it's like transcription, you can involve public in all sorts of ways in terms of the investigation. It can be simply lots of people helping scientists. It can mean democratisation of various sorts – how do you actually alter authority relationships and therefore change people’s perspectives. (Interview G2.02)

… we identify there's a huge value in community heritage research. So, all this research carried out by community groups. It's just not tapped, and there's loads of stuff out there that could really be good to helping out historic environment records. It should be, you know, advising on creating new research agendas, in terms of regional ones, sectoral ones, and so part of my own project outside of the research of this stuff is actually trying to say – ‘Right, the community groups need to be part of the process’. Moving towards, rather than a passive, sitting down at a conference, to an active, this is my research interest. I would like it to be put as part of the mix, developing the regional research agenda for historic environment for the next five years in an area. It's a big…, it's a good move, it'll be interesting. (Interview G3.01)

The interviewees mentioned a range of well-established projects involving citizen scientists such as Citizan (Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network), a large community archaeology project led by MOLA and delivered in partnership with a range of partners, including Historic England (Interview G3.01). Another group of such projects was linked to research in digital environment such as crowdsourcing projects at the British Library, engaging public with tasks related to classification and description of digital collections, but also underpinning research on the projects such as Living with Machines, the Library AI and machine learning project delivered with the Turing Institute (BL 2022: 13).

Another area that stood out in terms of its long-term use of citizen science is taxonomy, where the role of long-term volunteers in collecting, identifying and describing organisms seems to be in the very fabric of international taxonomic research. An interviewee at the Natural History Museum described a range of such relationships underpinning the Museum’s work, including this instance of a mysterious collaborator in Prague -
I mean, there are people I collaborated with for decades, but I never met. There is one guy, I leave his boxes for him in the Prague museum, and he will go and pick them up, and then he will leave them again all labelled up and processed, with manuscripts and publications and such likes, but I never met him, and I said to my colleague in the Prague museum - You know, I have never met S [name redacted, first initial only]. What is he like? And the guy said – Oh, well, he sends his mum to pick up his boxes. (Interview G1.04)

In this instance the expertise of citizen scientists was seen as of particular value and it appears to be a systemic feature of this particular type of research with the lines blurred between professional and amateur experts -

I had an old friend, I still have an old friend [name redacted], who is in his 80s …and he says that is an amateur taxonomist and a professional taxonomist, and there is a good taxonomist and there is a bad taxonomist, there is no any correlation between any of the above. And I'm sure he's right. This guy is an amateur, as far as I know. He might be a schoolteacher, or a university lecturer, or on the fringes of academia, but he certainly not employed by an institution to do this. This is his hobby.

…And by the time somebody comes to 70, their expertise is at the really high level because it accumulates throughout their life. So, often the older ones are better than the younger ones, and this is just the fact of them being older, just a factor of different generation. (Interview G1.04)

Just as in the case of crowdsourcing at the British Library, the role of citizen scientist is integral to institutional research functions, but in this instance we can clearly see that this type of relationship with citizen scientists existed in the institutions for very long time, by in the new context transitioning into new forms of relationships, such as in the case of digital projects, and also with institutions seeking to diversify a range of people involved in such projects.
14.3 Outputs and outcomes

Figure 26 shows the sub-themes related to outcomes and outputs of research that were discussed in the interviews –

Figure 26 - NVivo hierarchy chart showing sub-themes of outcomes and outputs of research
14.3.1 Publishing research

We have already seen in Chapter 4 (see page 109) that the UK national cultural organisations are shifting their expectations in terms of their staff publishing in high impact scientific publications. The British Museum case study in Chapter 6 (see page 216) provides historic insight regarding the British Museum’s publication culture and practice in the second part of the 20th century. The issue of publication and how institutional publishing channels fit, or do not fit, with the expected academic publication methods, is one of the key themes resulting from the interviews conducted as a part of this study.

The importance of publishing research outputs was emphasised by some institutions (British Museum, Natural History Museum), while it was seen as less important by others (British Library, Historic England). However, across the board many interviewees expressed their unease with academic publishing culture, especially in terms of its relevance for their research, institutions, and society. At the same time, the institutions were seeking to improve their own publication record and fit within disciplinary publication expectations, especially in the areas where their research provision was strong. An interviewee from the British Museum explained –

[We] should publish more in peer-reviewed journals. So, a lot of our publications are sometimes in book chapters, exhibition catalogues, which again is very much the nature of museum business. But at the same time, [we] want to see our papers appearing in core research journals for museums, for heritage science, for archaeological science, but also in wider science journals. We’ve had papers published in scientific reports, and Plos One, so articles that are perhaps broader, making a broader contribution to scientific knowledge than a museum-based or an archaeologically focused journal. [We are] keen to try and support that. (Interview G1.06)

There is no doubt that the picture uncovered in the interviews is significantly different to the historic snapshot in the British Museum case study (see page 216). It is also very different to the finding of Lifting the Veil study (Gunn & Prescott 1999), which reported that museum publishing activity was focused mainly on collection catalogues, produced in the highest numbers by national
museums. Journal articles in scientific publications were not even mentioned as significant in this report. At the time only 9% of respondents published on the internet (Gunn & Prescott 1999: 35).

Looking at the three institutions that are focus of this study, their attitude towards research publications is one area where the differences between the institutions were pronounced. The Natural History Museum had formal targets for research publications on both individual and institutional level, distinguishing between different disciplines, as well as trying to increase its level of publication in high impact journals (Interviews G1.02; G1.04; G2.02). An interviewee from the Natural History Museum explained –

*We have a set of competencies and performance expectations for different grades of staff in research. And they are expected to deliver. And it is set out in a standardised form, but then it is nuanced on individual level. So, depending on which area of science you are working in, you might have a higher income target or a lower income target, and you're expected to apply for grants and bring those in, and to produce a certain number of articles in higher Impact journals. And I use impact in inverted comas. Because it is not quite the same as the ISI (International Scientific Information) system. So, we say – which group of journals are appropriate for the sort of science we are doing. And therefore, what we are trying to do is to encourage a shift from publishing in the sort of ‘Hampstead naturalist journal’ to publishing in Nature. (Interview G2.02)*

The British Museum also had an organisational publication target, but not individual targets for publications (Interviews G1.05; G2.02; G2.04). An interviewee from the British Museum explained the process for deciding what gets published as an organic, collection-driven process -

*It is more organic. It is driven by material that needs publications. That's the basis of it. For example, I have a colleague who is doing collections [from another period], so she has research projects that are based on [these] collections, because again they are outstanding in a sense of the material that has not been researched and published. (Interview G1.05)*

The role of individual curators and departments was described as follows -
I think it tends to come back to curators rather than being a strategic thing within a department. Having said that, each department has to produce departmental plan, and so, the heads of department should have a broad overview of the research projects in progress and will take a view on whether they think they are good things be doing. But they're not, they're not… The heads of department don’t tend to mould the direction of research in that sense. (Interview G1.05)

Despite some differences, both the British Museum and the Natural History Museum interviewees felt that publication of research is an important part of their research functions and it was evident that these institutions took steps to encourage publication of research and include it in their reporting.

The British Library, on the other hand, offered a stark contrast, as it did not have any institutional expectations in terms of staff publishing their research. An interviewee from the British Library explained the difference as follows –

There’s less attention paid at the British Library, I think, compared to the British Museum to actual academic publications by its staff, which is interesting because a lot of talk at the British Library about its staff are research as well as facilitators of research. But, for example, at the British Museum every year, if you were a research active curator, you submitted a list of that year’s publications. You identified which ones were peer reviewed and it was not a big heavy process, but it was definitely an important part of the Museum recognising its research output. Whereas at the British Library, I put it on my PMR (Performance Review) every year and I don't think it has once had a positive comment despite being on there every year, and despite the fact that every year I've managed to do at least two articles despite doing the job I do. So, I’ve done it because I wanted it to be recorded, but I don't I don't think the Library does very much about that. (Interview G1.03)

Some British Library interviewees also had very ambivalent attitudes towards the value of academic publications. The British Library interviewees tended to show higher level of interest in non-published, less-traditional research outputs – datasets, infrastructures, digital tools, public engagement, etc. –
I’ve been relatively lazy about writing and I think it is, if I think about that, it is partly because publishing academic articles is not something that is particularly rewarded in the context of the British Library as an organisation, so I could write a dozen journal articles per year and basically nobody would care. Right. But there’ve been some articles.

…So, if I write hundred articles and it doesn’t make it easier for researcher to use our content, or it doesn’t make it likely that we have, you know, taken the steps required to make our digital content last longer in the future, then there is no value. (Interview G1.01)

However, other staff at the British Library were keen to publish their research and doing it even if it was not expected by the Library. These staff were at times frustrated that the institution did not take any notice or formally acknowledged this work –

*I think the BL struggles with the idea of, sort of, pure research and academic publications coming out of that as a British Library output. We talked about it a lot when the Living Knowledge work was done and there was a lot of discussion at that point that it's about research of all kinds done by staff of all kinds. So, it's research about our visitors, research about all sorts of things, but I haven’t seen a corresponding increase in attention on outputs like that alongside the increasing attention I've seen on outputs like more money and things like that.* (Interview G1.03)

The British Library ambivalent attitudes to academic publications are quite common within the broader UK national cultural organisations landscape, where there is often a simultaneous high level of scepticism in terms of usefulness of academic publications, and an imperative to disseminate research findings to much broader audiences and rise the visibility of institutional research.

An interviewee from the Royal Botanical Garden Kew expressed his vies as follows -

*Well, the issues that I have with what we measure for research, which you’ll see from that, is the number of papers published, impact factor, the usual, sort of, university metrics which don’t measure impact actually. They measure how many people, how many other academics read your papers. So, this gulf between research and practice, particularly I would*
say in botanic gardens, because we have not only good researchers, but we also have people who can grow plants. So being able to answer questions about how you conserve, manage, or use plant diversity in the landscape is something that we should be very capable of doing.

…People want to get publications out there, that’s the measure. Not who reads it, or what is the real societal impact is of that. It’s the usual, you’ll be familiar with the publish or perish and I think I’m not alone in raising that as an issue. It’s very much an issue in academia, there’s a lot of frustration and I think the journals help to drive that.

…There’s a lot of things that we can that would be extremely helpful for people trying to grow plants out there in the landscape, but we don’t because it’s not sexy. It won’t get your paper in Nature. (Interview G3.02)

While the institutional differences in terms of how they treat publications seem significant, once the interviewees were discussing the broader issues of research communication and the rationale for publishing, many more commonalities emerged. For example, the interviewees from all institutions included in this study described a format of publication described as ‘publishing a collection’. This type of publication is discussed in the next section.

Regardless of the types of publications favoured by different institutions, all institutions shared a view that publishing and communicating their research was important. In the recent years, the British Library led the development of a shared research repository for cultural organisations, which at the time of writing included MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), National Museums Scotland, British Library, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the British Museum. The repository brought together a range of research outputs from these institutions – journal articles, books, datasets, reports, exhibition catalogues, conference papers and more. The repository was enabling the institutional compliance with the UK funders open access policies, but it was also enabling better dissemination and reusability of their research.
In our archival investigation of the British Museum’s Scholarship Committee, we have already seen a high level of importance attached to the production of catalogues by the Keepers (BM Scholarship: 28 February 1980, also see Chapter 6, page 216). The significance of catalogue publication is further emphasised in The British Museum Research Register 1994-1996, which states that –

*The phrase ‘British Museum Catalogue’ has since the 19th century been famous throughout the academic world and synonymous with authoritative research. The catalogues of classical coins and lamps are, for example, now standard reference works used in every excavation in the Classical world and in every museum or university that studies the history of Greece and Rome. (BM 1997: 11).*

Mack & Burnett In their discussion paper for the Scholarship Committee in 1998 (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998) are more nuanced stating that not all research in the Museum focuses on producing ‘catalogues raisonnés’, but that this approach, inherited from the 19th and the early 20th century, ‘still retains great value’ ‘as an expression of the museum’s unique role as a source of real knowledge about objects’ (BM Scholarship: 16 January 1998). Wilson, on the other hand, recognises that –

*Catalogues certainly lost momentum in parts of the Museum, in some measure because the academic world was changing and demanded more from the institution. (Wilson 2002: 245)*

Wilson (2002) attributes some of the change to the expansion of higher education with the rise of the new civic universities and the new academic subjects such as prehistoric archaeology, anthropology, and art history, lamenting that, while continuing to ride high in terms of research, the British Museum will perhaps never again ‘achieve the pre-eminent position it held in the 1920s and 1930s’ (Wilson 2002: 245-247).

Another major issue related to catalogues that we can see in this historic example from the British Museum was a rise in their cost both to the British Museum Publications, that were subsidised to publish them, and to libraries and
individuals that were finding it difficult to afford them (BM Scholarship: 8 June 1976, 3 March 1977). We find that the Warburg Institute and the Council for British Archaeology have written to the Scholarship Committee noting their ‘unease at the excessively high prices being brought out by British Museum Publications Ltd’, suggesting that the British Museum should introduce publication of less lavish volumes to bring the price down for researchers and libraries (BM Scholarship: 8 June 1976). This approach was also encouraged by the trustees, but not favoured by the Keepers who emphasised that the catalogues as works of permanent value require special typography, layout and high-quality images, which could not be achieved if using cheaper publication methods (BM Scholarship: 3 March 1977).

Michael Hoare, the first Managing Director of the British Museum Publications, was a regular attendee of the Committee for Scholarship, joining the discussion with the trustees, who were trying to establish more sustainable publication regime, and are constantly concerned about a number of expensive scholarly works awaiting publication, publication delays and increasing costs. Hoare assessed the situation regarding the catalogue publication as follows:

As a layman I am struck by the amount of original research which traditionally goes into catalogues. I assume that one main purpose of a catalogue is to disseminate factual information on what is actually in the Museum’s collections and available for study and (perhaps equally importantly), by omission, what is not. But they sometimes seem to be used as a means of publishing the fruits of a scholar’s research work even before they are an inventory. This contributes to the ultimate cost, the time taken to publish useful areas where the interests and specialisms of the curatorial staff at a particular moment of time are a governing factor, rather than what the world at large most needs. (BM Scholarship: 27 September 1979)

The Scholarship Committee explored a range of new publication models, introducing more economic formats such as fascicules and Occasional Papers, as well as alternative publication formats such as camera-ready transcripts (BM Scholarship: 28 February 1980). To improve sustainability of the Museum’s publications, the Scholarship Committee developed the definitions of different types of catalogues, including Full Catalogues, Category Catalogues, Exhibition-
linked Catalogues, Study Catalogues and Short-entry Catalogues (BM Scholarship: 15 November 1983). This categorisation was proposed by William Watson, who chaired the Committee at the time, in a typical hands-on fashion of the Museum trustee from this time. At this time, we also find a first proposal for the Production of Short-Entry Catalogue or Handlists by Computer (BM Scholarship: 17 May 1984).

The Scholarship Committee perceived that its role should be as 'a forum in which such topics such as cataloguing could be discussed with the Keepers', as opposed to the Keepers being independent in deciding the ways in which the collections are catalogues and in what order (BM Scholarship: 19 December 1984). This very hands-on approach is in line with the way in which the British Museum trustees operated at this time, and their concern is less surprising if we consider two major factors informing the British Museum’s publication programmes. One is that publication of collections, at this time, is still directly linked to the Museum’s public accountability, to its capability to tell public and academic world about its collections, and to provide sufficient information that would enable others to do their research. This is described by Dr Kent, Keeper of Coins and Medals, in his report to the trustees in 1985 -

The Department has produced about one hundred catalogues, besides other publications, since its foundation, and as a result the Museum’s collection is more extensively published than that of any other major cabinet. This has led to advantageous consequences. In the first place, the concentration of academic effort successively on limited ranges of material has brought considerable advances in those areas, which Museum officers in the forefront of research.

(BM Scholarship: 3 July 1985)

The accountability aspect is best illustrated by the already mentioned Research Registers, with two published volumes covering three-year periods – 1991-93 and 1994-96 (BM 1994 and BM 1997). These documents, supported by the Scholarship Committee, have been produced ‘to provide information about the nature of the research, being undertaken by the Museum’ (BM 1994: 1). These publications provide information on the volume of the Museum’s publication activity and include, not only monographs and catalogues, but also trade books, peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, edited books, etc.
While the formats for this type of publication were varied, the main aim of these publications was to help others know what the collections contain and their key characteristics. In a contemporary setting at the Natural History Museum, one interviewee explained it as follows -

*The new material will get published, and then the scientific community will know that, you know, that this specific collection is in London, or that London has acquired new material from the mountains of Tanzania or from the canopies of whatever… (Interview G1.04)*

It is worth noting here that in this particular area, the British Museum has a very distinct organisational culture, which tends to include very long publication projects. A need to establish control over such projects was one of the reasons behind the formation of the Scholarship Committee in 1974 (see Chapter 6, page 204). One British Museum interviewee described this situation as follows –

*I always like example of the catalogue of the coins of Alexander the Great, which I think was published in 1992, and I came across one of these old reports to the Trustees saying the catalogue of the coins of Alexander the Great is ready for the press, where it will be going next year, and that was in 1910. I think it is just in the nature of research projects that they can go wrong. (Interview G2.04)*

Another interview from the British Museum provided this detailed explanation of how one of the interviewees came to spend a part of his career focusing on a publication of a major collection -

*The Museum also was conscious of the fact that [this collection] never had a full treatment. It had some research done on it, but it’s never really been properly published which I think was, I don’t think embarrassment is the right word, but it was certainly seen as a lacuna in the Museum’s portfolio of research. And, to some extent it is also to do with circumstance, so there are two predecessors who may have done publication. One [redacted] I think, he always wanted to do a full treatment, but he never quite got around to it, but he did publish a short introduction to [the collection back in the 1970s]. So, he planned to do something, but it never quite happened, and then his successor, also may have considered doing something, but she then got involved with*
another collection, which was [discovered at the time]. Because [this new collection] arrived at the Museum and had such a huge range of material, I think her focus shifted to [the new collection], and so she really spent the remainder of her career finalising that work. In fact, she did not publish it until after she retired, which might demonstrate something of the fact that it's very hard actually during a normal curatorial time to do the research needed on something like this. So, that really explains why I ended up doing it, because it has been in the Museum [for several decades], which is a very long time. (Interview G1.05)

14.3.3 Other non-traditional outputs of research

The interviews explored a wide range of research outputs and outcomes, including different publications, public engagement, infrastructure, exhibitions, digitisation, discovery of new species and objects, datasets, collection documentation, cataloguing, new and improved services, standards and guidance, digital preservation, designation and listing, software, presentations, press articles, media work, etc. In many instances these outcomes of research were directly linked to institutional responsibilities in managing and preserving their collections. The conservation work of both physical and digital collections both required research capabilities but was also enabling function of further research. An interviewee from the British Museum described the primary research functions enabling preservation of collections -

I guess that the priorities in a museum sense for things like that - the first and foremost is preservation of material and conservation of material. So actually, the first, say, could be up to five ten after the acquisition, the focus is much more on conservation work and so on, not so much the objects themselves. Hm. I mean, my colleague, who's recently retired, he acquired [this collection] which counts as religious objects, that came to the Museum the early 2000s, very fragmentary, very broken, requiring many, many years of painstaking conservation and scientific work to reconstruct. So, he was unable to do the primary research on what the objects were and their significance and their context until that process have been gone through. (Interview G1.05)
Another interviewee from the British Library described a range of research projects, influencing development of new services for digital preservation -

*And then there is software, influencing third party products and services as well, so I think some of the Planets projects, the big digital preservation research project, have had substantial influence on both Rosetta and Preservica which are the two kind of leading digital, long-term digital archiving services into library and archive market.* (Interview G1.01)

The proximity of collection and collection-based research was feeds into the whole range of other institutional processes. An interviewee from the Natural History Museum described it as follows -

*So, they do better and more significant research as a result of having that proximity to the collection. They can drive the development of the collection. And that might be acquisition of new specimens, but it might also be reinterpretation and re-interrogation, and I see digitisation as an aspect of that.* (Interview G2.02)

Similar permeability between research and other key institutional functions was described by an interviewee from the British Museum -

*In terms of other outcomes – what I was saying about documentation – enhanced documentation. Though we are moving more towards doing more digital outputs, so for example – we did not do this, but we may have done, for example 3-D modelling of objects to allow people to do fancy things computer-wise.* (Interview G1.05)

Again, this includes both more traditional and new digital outputs. The process of digitisation has often been described as intrinsically linked to research functions. Significant research effort is often required in selecting materials for digitisation, in contextualising these collections, creating and improving metadata, or re-interpreting digitised collections. An interviewee from the Natural History Museum even describe how digitisation process creates an opportunity to discover new species in the existing collections -

*So, that is the whole collection there. And this is all on the database. It is all automated and arranged, each one of these drawers. And one of the things that what we are doing, we are going through this material looking*
for new species, going through this material looking to identify specimens that are present. (Interview G1.04)

Ranging from the opportunity to create new documentation, new services, or to open opportunities for a range of digital outcomes, this wide range of non-traditional research outcomes and outputs was intrinsic part of institutional research and often more firmly embedded in institutional research rationale than published outputs, especially those in academic publications.

14.3.4 Datasets

We have already commented on the growing importance of open data on the UK national cultural organisations. The interviewees placed a high value on research that created and published data, especially open and reusable data. In many instances such data are put to very practical use, as in the following example given by an interviewee from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew -

… Kew's seed information database is a great example of an output which delivers germination protocols, methodologies to tens of thousands of users out there. If you want to know how to germinate a plant, you stick the name of the plant into the seed information database. (Interview G3.02)

Let me give you an example. BGCI (Botanic Gardens Conservation International) last year, after two years of work, launched the Global Tree Search, so the first database of the world's tree species. … Now, [BGCI] published that list with an accompanying paper which just had the basic trends, which countries had the most tree species in the world. Brazil. What's the top ten? What are the top tree families? etc. [BGCI] published that deliberately in a practitioners' journal, in the Journal of Sustainable Forestry. [BGCI] could have got it into Nature or Science, but [they] wanted a journal that would be read by foresters, by people who actually need to know about how to grow trees and where to look and so on. (Interview G3.02)

An interviewee from the British Museum gave an example for another field, but a similar ethos of collaborative international and cross-sectoral effort in creating and developing datasets -
So, I'm working on very early pottery from [another part of the world] and our collections are… we have nothing in that. So, I have to collaborate with other museums, but the techniques that I'm developing, the ways in which we're generating data, can be very useful to apply to our collections in other parts of the world, and in another archaeological and historic context. (Interview G1.06)

We have already mentioned the significance of digitisation process, which also underpins data creation -

So, what you do is - you generate big data sets from the collection as result of digitisation. (Interview G2.02)

In some instances, such as the British Library, this has led to the development of new teams and services that are solely focused on data -

Research activities enabled us to have a team orientated around digital data and research data, and gave rise to persistent identifier work that led to DataCite. (Interview G1.01)

The British Library runs UK DataCite, an international initiative enabling researchers to cite datasets by assigning digital object identifiers (DOIs) to datasets, thus enhancing recognition of data as research output and promoting data sharing (Interview G1.01). This is yet another example of institutional research linking with its services to the broader research community.
14.3.5 Public engagement

In Chapter 4 (page 139) we have discussed the UK research impact policies in relation to research functions of the UK national cultural organisations. We have discussed how this policy is central to institutional position in the current research landscape, but also that social and economic impact was understood as much broader and vital issue for institutions than a compliance to the requirements of research funders. This is especially evident in the areas of public engagement with research. This is also another area where there has been a significant change from the second half of the 20th century, when research functions and public engagement were seen as unconnected, or even opposed to each other. The influence of research policies, as well as several decades of constrained public funding, have transformed the attitudes and brought much greater focus on the importance of bringing institutional research closer to public. In scientific areas, an increasing need to ensure better public understanding of science in the key areas such as climate, biodiversity and health has strengthened institutional focus on public engagement with its research functions. An interviewee from the Natural History Museum described it as follows -

"I think we have to make ourselves relevant. A lot of people think there is few academics sitting in the cupboard playing with dead [organisms] consuming taxpayer money and that is not necessarily an image that we can survive. So, we need to go out there and we need to explain to people. I mean, I teach at lots of universities, I go to schools, and so do my colleagues. And they explain what we do in schools. And we go to places like Google, to places where the great and the good gather, and try to explain to decision makers and general public and to taxpayers why a museum like this is significant in a modern world. There is a functionalistic, anti-intellectual attitude that creeps into our society, and we have to be aware of the fact that there are 400,000 species of these organisms, probably one or two thousands of those are agricultural pests, or factors in plant diseases or biological control agents that we can use and a large number of those are minding their own business in natural habitats and not doing any harm or any good. And there is a philosophy that such things are not relevant to progress and that that"
which is not of medical importance, or ecological, environmental, agricultural importance, is not interesting. And there are discoveries that are being made that are of cultural interest, there are discoveries that are being made that are of accidental scientific interest. You know, what we are basically arguing is a need for research and a need for science, a need for a deeper understanding of the world and how the world works, and also there is an urgency for all of this because these natural habitats are disappearing. Human population is growing, human consumption of natural resources is increasing, and very often a native forest or a piece of habitat might be regarded as wasteland, or unused land. That is very much a conventional view. And, I think, gradually, because of the efforts that people like museums are making, the larger and larger part of population is not thinking of tropical forest as an underdeveloped wasteland, but potentially as something that should be valued culturally. And I just think reaching out to the public and explaining what we’re doing is a very important thing and a part of what we are doing.

…We don’t want to sit in an ivory tower, this is why we published our research and that is why we would often go to newspapers and to non-scientific media with our research. So, when we publish a scientific paper, we will very often have something in the newspapers, and it even gets into the Daily Mail in the Sun, and all this nonsense. You know, researchers in the Natural History Museum have discovered a new species of frog, or researchers in the Natural History Museum have discovered that this tree is pollinated by only this type of bee, and if this bee becomes extinct then this tree will also become extinct. (Interview G1.04)

Research active staff tended to describe a range of public engagement activities that are part of their jobs. They were seeing them as a natural extension of what they do, and not in opposition to their scientific and research duties. A scientist at the Natural History Museum said -

Well, apart from exhibits, we also have public talks sometimes, and sometimes we are asked to contribute to that sort of thing. For example, I’m doing a workshop with A-level students next week.
...So, there is something called Nature Live, where scientists go and give public talks and they are helped by a science communicator, who is from the PEG – the Public Engagement Group. And they are really popular. So, we do try. (Interview G1.02)

Similarly, a British Museum interviewee described his public engagement work, and how it connects to his research –

...We have these ‘eye-opener tours’, which are where we have volunteers talking about the collections, so they do a gallery tour. So again, we would revise what they’re telling people as a result of this research. The online materials I’ve mentioned, so the updating of those, providing more information, more imagery. So, the better images would be provided to the public. Then, of course, there's a whole thing like big public lectures. So, I gave [] a lecture here at lunch time, a free lunchtime lecture, in the main lecture theatre here. Completely sold out. So, over 300 people came to hear about the discovery and new findings about [this collection]. So, there is lots of different ways in which this is disseminated. An article in [a magazine], an article coming out in [another magazine]. …So, all these sorts of ways of getting information out there is very much something that we do. (Interview G1.05)

We have already mentioned the view of interviewees that public engagement in the UK national cultural institutions is different to that in universities (see Chapter 4, page 140). In some instances, as in this example from the British Library, the perception of university public engagement was completely connected to funding requirements and their consequences -

It is to do with funding, which is to do with… there’s been that whole impact agenda, and I’m sure this might be something that's on your list of questions for later, but the interesting challenge for heritage organisations is that the academia is getting very overexcited about the impact agenda. A lot of them hate it and some people are deliberately trying to avoid it, but heritage organisations have been doing this forever and know how to do it, and there is something slightly annoying about having to continually fend off academics who want to have a conference at the British Library and having to explain to them that impact doesn't just look like conferences at the British Library. But, I think, there’s also
an interesting role that we can play in terms of getting funding. In a sort of shape-shifting role we can be researches and we can be a research intensive organisation, or we can be an organisation that really knows how to communicate with broad audiences across a number of different ways of doing that, so programming, displays, digital outputs, all sorts, and I think that's a real strength, but the current funding structures, programmes, priorities and bodies find it difficult for an organization to have that sort of shape-shifting role…

(Interview G1.03)

Another example, from the Natural History Museum, also perceives some differences, but also identifies some weaknesses in terms of the Museum’s agility to innovate in relation to new forms of public engagement -

So, the university does not have a mission in respect to a wider public, or it hasn’t traditionally So, you think about… So, for example, a university is interested in producing intellectual goods and to pushing these out to the wider world. They've come under increasing pressure to engage the public with the university, and to some degree, depending on the funding, to engage the public with the product of research. But it tends to be quite a… I think it will change, we are not unique, we are not alone in this. But in universities, people I talked to have different perspectives, some of them over-intellectualise it in my opinion, especially if you have sociologists involved. And they tend then to use foreign languages of various sorts, which resemble English. And which actually ceases to have relevance to practitioners. But I'm being a bit rude. But universities tend to see there being a line around the university and they are passing things over to people. That's a traditional view. So, it is a public understanding of science view. Public engagement and public participation go well beyond that. And so, you can see that some universities and some parts of universities are moving in that direction. I think what we have is - we have been doing it for a long time. The limitation for us is our size. We are very big, so our potential for experimentation and rapid change is quite limited. We have to get it right. (Interview G2.02)
14.3.6 Exhibitions

This study explored some of the key issues arising both historically and in more contemporary context, especially in terms of any conflicts, or any links between research and exhibitions. Overall, and in the same way as we have already seen with the broader theme of public engagement, the interviewees viewed it as an important way to disseminate their research, and argued for more integration between exhibitions and research functions. We have seen the examples from the British Museum explaining the direction of travel attempting to remove ‘unhelpful distinctions’ between exhibitions and research (Interview G2.01, also see Chapter 4, page 140). This was supported by other British Museum interviews where the interviewees talked about close connections between their research and exhibits. In this example, an interviewee envisages how their research will inform the gallery displays when they are refreshed in the future -

So, to the public functions of the Museum? I suppose the main way would be through the gallery displays, so updating the information that we provide in the galleries, which we haven’t actually done, but we would, if we were going to refresh gallery. We would certainly change the emphasis on what is on the labels and the panels as a result of research projects like this. So, at the moment, for example, [this collection] display is quite focused, on the, say, the representations on the vessels, the iconography side of things, the discovery. We may switch shift focus more to the whole [collection focus towards] the contextual side of things. And certainly, probably interpreting some of the vessels in different ways. …So that feeds into that. (Interview G1.05)

One British Library interviewee argued that the quality of exhibitions is closely related to research, but also reflecting on the difficulties in conveying the role of research to public -

I think the best exhibitions come from real research, because that's one of the ways you can find a perspective that hasn't been used before. Like, if you want to do something that isn't just a derivative or a survey kind of approach, you need that. And it also really, I mean, interrogating the collection is an important kind of research that is part of exhibitions
but also part of things like blogs and online content and so on, and I think that can be very powerful.

...Well, I suppose, the exhibitions can be two different kinds of things, one is what you call a survey exhibition and one is a real thesis-led exhibition, which is often much more tightly connected to academic research, but my experience at the British Museum, and I'm guessing it's the same here is that, even if it's the latter, it's really really difficult to get the public to realise that. Even if you have a panel up that says research for this exhibition was funded by the AHRC or something, it's really interestingly difficult to get that across to some of our public audiences. It's like people expect universities to do that, but they don't necessarily expect museums and libraries to do it. Hm. So, yeah, I think it's difficult. It's really difficult. (Interview G1.03)

Even at the Natural History Museum, where the scientists role in particular was moved away from public-facing functions (see Chapter 4, page 111), there was an evidence of some correlations between the Museum’s research and its scientific activity -

*We will have in the new main hall, the Hintze Hall, which will open next July, the scientists have been very involved in that. So, there are scientific stories to be told. Of course, because it's a permanent exhibition, you need to be conscious of the life-time of that. So, again, it is - where I think the science is challenging with 5.5 million people, it is in programme terms.* (Interview G2.02)

The Natural History Museum situation stems from greater professionalisation of both science and public orientated activities, bringing us back to the issue of changes in the nature of curatorial roles and many different aspects of these roles, which are difficult to find in one individual, or one type of professional. An interview for V&A described a situation in which V&A curators found it difficult to produce new narrative vision for a set of new galleries -

*The gallery programme had, when I was there, a crucial, crucial thing which was the Europe 1600-1800 but they're also redoing finally the northeast quarter of the museum which will bring really a set of galleries that take it from then to the present. So, the 19th and 20th Centuries are*
now being done. Tristram (Hunt) was very, very keen on that and eager to connect with that, and I think what was interesting was that he and Lyn Nead in particular, who’s also late-19th Century and early-20th, right away wanted, I think prematurely, wanted presentations from the curators about the intellectual vision for those galleries, and they weren't able to deliver it. It was very interesting, and they saw that as on some level a problem with the way curators work or are trained to work which is that all they were really able to do is say, 'Well, this object must be in this gallery. Amazing story, beautiful object, my favourite.'

…No big picture, no story, really. Of course, some curators are very good at stories but a lot of them aren't, and I think that was something that Tristram and the trustees will definitely…, I’ll be shocked if they don’t focus on it because it struck them both right away as a problem.

(Interview G3.03)

Staying on the top of their game in terms of quality of their exhibition programmes is likely to remain the top priority for the UK national cultural organisations. This means that the relationship of research functions with institutional exhibition programmes and processes will be of crucial importance for their future. However, while there is an awareness that there is a link between these two types of activity and great benefits from their ability to work together, we don’t have much evidence yet of the emergence of institutional strategies that are looking to build stronger correlation between research functions and exhibitions.
UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap (2019) uses an infrastructure definition used by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and the EU Framework Programme -

*Facilities, resources and services that are used by the research and innovation communities to conduct research and foster innovation in their fields. They include: major scientific equipment (or sets of instruments), knowledge-based resources such as collections, archives and scientific data, e-infrastructures, such as data and computing systems and communication networks and any other tools that are essential to achieve excellence in research and innovation.* (UKRI 2019: 6)

The UKRI landscape analysis of the UK research infrastructures included GLAM facilities, seemingly treating them in the same vein as other research infrastructures. For example, museums are mentioned in the categorisation of single site entity infrastructures -

*Single-site/single entity infrastructures are central facilities geographically localised in a single site, such as a museum, an observatory housing telescopes or a synchrotron.* (UKRI 2019: 14)

However, it is not long before the issues start to emerge. First of all, all museums, archives and collections are classed under social sciences, arts and humanities sector, presenting a huge difficulty for institutions that partly or wholly operate in sciences –

*Social sciences, arts and humanities sector has 56% of staff listed as being in ‘other roles’, which includes large ESFRI infrastructures as well as museums, archives and collections.* (UKRI 2019: 29)

More significantly, as the initial landscape analysis progressed to become a full investment policy related to the UK ‘science superpower’ ambitions, only small elements of such infrastructures remain in this framework – mainly facilities necessary for heritage science (UKRI 2022). What remains completely absent is any sense of deeper policy in terms of institutional funding and policy context, or overall health of the GLAM research infrastructures. While the analysis briefly mentions that DCMS funds many research infrastructures (UKRI 2019: 55), that
is as far as it goes. There is no further attempt to understand these infrastructural ecosystems, or their infrastructural needs. While the acknowledgement of GLAM as part of research infrastructure is an improvement on the previous situation, its treatment within these policies (UKRI 2019, 2020a&b, 2022a&b) is far from presenting a systemic solution for the UK national cultural organisations as research infrastructures.

The interviews from our thesis revealed much more comprehensive understanding within institutions in terms of their entire institutional ecosystems being a part of the UK and global research infrastructure. An interviewee from the Natural History Museum explained it as follows -

So, there are two duties – one is providing access to the collection and the other is preserving it. So, giving access to the collection and preserving the collection – these are two things we are here for. It starts to get a little bit theological. But you can say – well, what is the collection? Is it simply a locked-up stuff? Or is it a set of ideas as well? Is it coherent? Does it have meaning in itself? So, coming back to my original point – the way you looked at the collection in the 17th Century would be quite different, and it depends on your perspective as well. But what we rely on those research scientists to do is not only to pull value out of the collection, but to push the value into the collection. So, their discoveries, their acquisitions, work in terms of annotation and data that go with it, actually change the meaning of the collection, so that it better represents the outside world. It represents reality. And so, you could say - as an infrastructure the collection is a model of reality.

… So, in the same way as the Library, you might say that is a model of human knowledge. And so, you could simply have lots of books there, but it is not an infrastructure unless someone knows where those books are and decides on putting in new putting books. (Interview G2.02)

This means that the institutional work is often focused on improving the ways in which they function as research infrastructures. The interviewees described this as a part of their everyday work and key priority. An interviewee from the British Library, for example, described the Library’s development of digital infrastructures -
We’ve done a lot work in the context of the British Library Labs project to deepen our understanding how researchers are trying to use our digital content, and that’s really helped make a quite profound change. I hope it’s profound and lasting change in the way that the folks developing those systems think about what end users are trying to do. So, the typical model used to be - end users are looking at some pretty pictures on the web and ordering things in the reading rooms - and now, when I go to meetings, hosted by our IT department, and there is much more awareness of computationally intensive, data intensive interactions with our digital content, which is great. I don’t want to say our IT infrastructure is there yet, but is definitely factored into, in part, in thinking about it. That is a pretty good example of a bunch of one-on-one conservations and engagement and bits and pieces has resulted in the change of attitude internally. (Interview G1.01)

The same interviewee also described the Library’s broader engagement with international research infrastructures, in this case related to research identifiers -

Yeah, it is about where the problem areas are, where are the hot spots, where they should be addressed through funded research programmes or should be addressed through other sorts of means, like policy, or requirement, or something like that. Where it is about offering the best service, and where it is about requiring a use of a service. And funders are typically very reluctant to require things because they find this hard to enforce and that is why we looked at clever integration approaches. So, an example there that we put within the THOR is integrating ORCID researcher identifiers into the authentication mechanism that is used by the European Commission for all projects. So, when you say I’m doing the project, you have to say who you are and where you work, and so on, and by integrating that with researcher identifier like ORCID then that enables them to downstream, collect publication and data associated with the person without the person having to do any more work. (Interview G1.01)

An interviewee from the Natural History Museum described a similar effort to develop and function as a part of larger international infrastructures, in this
case related to extra-terrestrial collections -

So, the idea is that there would be one place, a curation centre, and obviously, it would have to be in one country. So, there would be one centre, but it would be designed, so that all the different countries could contribute their expertise, so the samples would be sent out to different countries for specialised measurements, so it would still be a consortium approach.

...We already have these brilliant collections of meteorites. We have these samples of extra-terrestrial materials, so this is thinking for the next generation that would like to go into the space and collect things from certain places and bring them back. (Interview G1.02)

These examples show a range and depth of thinking in the institutions regarding research infrastructures, from a range of disciplinary models to the understanding of the entire collection as infrastructure. Chapter 5 (page 170) explores the policy fragmentation preventing our deeper understanding of the UK national cultural organisations in their role as research infrastructures.
14.4 Collaborations and partnerships

Figure 27 shows the sub-themes related to institutional collaborative and partnership activities that were discussed in the interviews – Figure 27 - NVivo hierarchy chart showing sub-themes for collaboration and partnerships
14.4.1 Universities

The area of collaborations and partnerships was identified as an essential component for research in the UK national cultural organisations. The interviewees identified a range of collaborators relevant for their research – universities, local authorities, other museums, independent research institutes, private sector, as well as community groups, volunteers and independent researchers. However, the interview conversations were dominated by university collaborations, even more so if we integrate a theme of PhD students as a distinctive collaborative group. This finding mirrors the statistics from the DCMS report on partnerships in the UK national cultural organisations, which recognises that university partnerships form 40% of all institutional collaborations (DCMS 2019a: 21) -

*The national museums reported forming at least 2,584 partnerships for research and other academic activity in 2017/18. These partners are spread across the world, with 1,025 in the UK and 1,559 internationally.*
*(DCMS 2019a: 28)*

However, collaborations with universities appeared to be in equal measure rewarding and frustrating for the interviewees. We have already seen that many features of university research were deemed to be superior to research functions in GLAM, especially in relation to higher pay and better resourced research environments, better support for research, as well as the clarity of research purpose in universities. However, the interviewees also noted many disadvantages of research in university environment, most frequently mentioning teaching responsibilities and pressure to publish (Interviews G2.04; G3.03).

The most worrying trend arising was that at times the nature of relationships described came across as problematic on more systemic level, with the nature of interests in GLAM and higher education sector looking as they are pulling further apart. This was in part due to different priorities and expectations, but also increasingly due to operating in different governmental and policy environments. As several interviewees worked in both university and GLAM environment, they recognised that relationship was problematic on both sides, as described by one such interviewee –
I think the things that struck me at the time, that surprised me, because again I had had very little experience of bridging those two worlds, was there was a lot of mutual suspicion and that, in particular, what I didn't expect was that my colleagues within the museum would be so almost as a default position defensive about any external academic. That was very interesting… At the other side, a complete cluelessness from the universities about what it was like to work within a national museum or a library.

… there are also structural inequalities. I mean, the university world likes to think of itself as very hard done by and very overworked and very underpaid, but come on, look at most of what people do in a national museum. They work harder hours, and they have far fewer chances for individual research, and that's the bottom line. (Interview G3.03)

In addition to the perceived structural inequalities such as lower pay and more difficult access to research resources, the interviewees described a range of situations that led to disagreement with universities. Sometimes this was about being told by university researchers that university research is of greater value, such as in this example from the Natural History Museum -

I remember, when I've just started at the Museum, my predecessor took me out for a dinner with some old boys from the Royal [discipline redacted] Society, and one of them was at a university and he made some comments about how only university people are real academics. My predecessor was furious, totally furious. (Interview G1.02)

More frequently it was about lack of acknowledgement of the GLAM contributions to collaborative research projects, as in this example from the British Library -

So, there was one research project which, in a different department at the BL, just finished when I arrived and it was a lovely project on a really interesting topic, had got couple of bits of AHRC funding. Great. Except when you looked at it from the outside, the British Library's name was nowhere on it. And then, when I arrived at the Library, the curatorial team who'd worked really hard on it, were really proud of it and talked about it as a genuine collaboration, and I had to do this really awkward thing of
pointing out to them that the university partner concerned was presenting it to the world as if it was their project, and we'd been basically a venue for their exhibition. That sort of mismatch was really sad, because the team here were really proud of a project and they hadn't realised that they were actually just contributing to such an extent and that we weren't getting credit in the way we should. (Interview G1.03)

Most frequently, however, the issues were stemming from a competitive nature of university research and a perception of hard push from academic researchers to find the areas of collaboration only in order to advance their own research agenda, especially looking for the types of collaborative projects that could deliver easy impact, additional funding, and publication returns. One such situation was described as follows -

… we were approached by [redacted] University who wanted to do sort of big data collaboration about [redacted] - and we thought – oh, interesting, and then it became clear that they did not know what they were talking about, and they were basically looking for projects to piggyback on and put their name on and we backed away really quickly. And we were like – no, we're big enough to do this without you. We don't somehow need your brand just because you're [name of university redacted] to get these projects off the ground because we know what we're doing. And so, I think there's something about being willing to be a bit kind of robust because universities are like that, and we need to be robust, when we're in areas that we're already strong in and other people are moving into, so I think that's both a challenge but it's basically an opportunity that we need to play right. (Interview G1.03)

These types of situations have led to increased awareness in the UK national cultural institutions that they need to have more control over research projects and the terms of their involvement in university collaborations, as expressed by an interviewee from the British Museum –

… we know what we want to do. Or it means - when someone comes to us with an interesting idea, we know which are the ones we want to do, which are the ones we say no to, which are then just worth following up. So, it gives you a much clearer sense of what you are doing. And a much clearer sense of how to play the game. (Interview G2.01)
The issue of greater control is also linked to institutions wanting to ensure that their research better aligns with their corporate objectives, as explained by an interviewee from Historic England -

*In terms of being an IRO you can be the lead, you can say, 'Right, this is what we want to do' … It gives us as an organisation much more control in terms of how we want to move things, certainly in terms of meeting some of our corporate objectives, but also sectoral strategy and things like that.* (Interview G3.01)

This study did not include interviews with university researchers, thus presenting only one side of the story. On the university end, it is known from anecdotal evidence that universities tend to perceive UK national cultural organisations as too controlling and corporate, too bureaucratic and slow, difficult to access, and obstructive to research that they perceive to be against their interests. They are often seen as lacking sufficient expertise and being too narrow in their research interests. No doubt that many characteristics of GLAM research horrify university researchers, not least, the high level of control that institutions have in relation to research done by their employees – including if and when they can do it, if and where they should publish it, and that all intellectual property generated through research belongs to institutions without any questions asked (Interviews G2.01; G3.03). As one of our interviewees put it in very stark terms –

*And the big difference is, you know, if need be, anyone in this Museum can be told what to do, which in a university will never happen. If we needed to, we could simply say to someone – Sorry, we need you to do the next five years of your life research in that topic. Go away and do it.* (Interview G2.01)

On a more positive note, one area of collaboration that is always singled out for praise in the UK national cultural organisations is the opportunities to work with PhD students, in particular through the Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships (CDP) funded by the UKRI, but also through other forms of collaborations, such as, for example, short term student placements. The interviewees often referred to their high level of commitment to PhD students, such as in this example from the British Museum -
We are very committed to the training and development of PhD students. And if we support early career researchers then they will get jobs, they will get positions and develop their careers knowing about what the British Museum is like, knowing the potential of the collections for new research questions, and they will want to come back and collaborate with us in the future. (Interview G1.06)

Another interviewee from the British Library expanded on the reasons why the collaborations involving PhD students are valuable to institutions -

They in general terms bring a sense of context to some parts of the collection we might not have expertise in otherwise. They bring understanding of what the cutting edge looks like in academia that staff, who haven't been in academia for a while, might not have. And they really directly find things out about our collection and topics related to it that are really useful. (Interview G1.03)

Based on these findings, it is likely that the future collaborations between universities and the UK national cultural organisations would benefit from finding a common language which would help them to better understand each other. We know, on the basis of many successful collaborations, that when universities and GLAM institutions work together, they can achieve much better research outcomes and much greater impact. The interviewees felt that the current research policy environment is conducive to such collaborations, especially in interdisciplinary areas, which should make such a goal even more desirable and achievable -

And the university sector, broadly construed, are being forced to work together by budgets, by research funding structures and just by a general sense of interdisciplinarity and even cross-sector work more than at any time in any of our memories, and so I think that was the drift. (Interview G3.03)

The UK national cultural organisations cannot sustain and grow their research functions without vibrant and open collaboration with universities. Despite all the issues discussed above, institutions remain close to universities and much of their work is dedicated, not only to collaborating with university researchers, but also serving their research needs in the true sense of public
purpose (Interviews G1.01; G1.04). We have already seen that some GLAM research is dedicated to making this service better and futureproof.

Conversely, universities can learn a lot from the UK national cultural organisations and other GLAM IROs, especially in arts and humanities. The institutions have a lot of expertise related to public engagement and impact, and many areas of unique research strengths, but also more developed strategic approach to their research priorities. An AHRC officer explained the difference between GLAM IROs and universities in the following way –

*But I think, and this is an important point in many respects about how you approach research and programmes of activity differently to the way in which we funded projects in universities. I think you do think of them as programmes. You think about them as a group of activities that might be around a common theme or a common purpose, but you do articulate it as - the AHRC is funding one element in that, but the overall aim was X.*

*My sense is that in the university context, it's much more still done at the project by project level. And, of course, with success rates being what they are and so on, there is then perhaps less of a strategic intervention and more of - ‘well, that institution got that fellowship and that's great, but they are putting two other applications as well because they did not get something else’ - there’s less of a strategy about it, because that seems to be more positioned around the funding. They apply whether they will they get it or not, rather than - 'where does that funding sit in a larger programme of engagement around arts and humanities.*

*(Interview G4.01)*

One area to watch for the future is a potential emergence of more strategic partnerships between universities and the UK national cultural organisations, such as the role that University of Reading could play in relation to the new British Museum and the Natural History Museum storage and research facilities at the Thames Valley Science Park (University of Reading 2017, 2022), or the continuing partnership between the British Library and the Alan Turing Institute (Interview G2.03; BL 2015).
Collaborations between the UK national research organisation and other GLAM organisations is much more harmonious than their collaborations with universities, even though occasional issues do arise. The interviewees frequently mentioned such collaborations as part of their research functions and everyday work. For the UK national cultural organisations such collaborations were often international in nature, and, for these national organisations, such collaborations were almost the only way to collaborate with their equivalents, other unique institutions with their own national remits. The extent and longevity of such collaborations is often not well known outside the institutions themselves. From a very long list of such collaborations, this example tells us a little bit about the extraordinary way in which museums of natural history across the world share their knowledge of different species, effectively functioning as an interconnected worldwide infrastructure of natural history museums -

So, this is an unidentified box of [organisms]. This belongs to another museum. It belongs to the Bishop Museum in Hawaii, in Honolulu. Right. So, their collectors have collected these [organisms], but they don’t have an expert on these [organisms], but we do. So just as we have sent our material to be identified, like that guy in Taiwan, they send their material out to experts to be identified, and they send this to my colleague M [name redacted] to identify because they don’t have anybody in the United States or in Hawaii who can identify this group of organisms. (Interview G1.04)

A number of foundational international partnerships that the interviewees perceived as important were built over time as a part of European research collaborations, as in these examples from the Natural History Museum –

So, this is a project to plan how Europe would curate samples returned from space during space missions. It’s quite an exciting project, but at the moment we don’t actually have any samples that the European Space Mission has brought back from space. So, we don’t have any samples to curate yet, but we are planning that. Hopefully that will happen in the future. And another one is called EUROPLANETS, and that is to enable country scientists from around Europe to use different
facilities around Europe. It helps people to move around different labs. And it provides funding for them to do that. (Interview G1.02)

This was often linked to a level of anxiety regarding the impacts of Brexit (Interviews G1.01; G1.02).

Some interviewees mentioned a range of difficulties in collaborating with other museums in international context, such as in this example –

There is also a certain degree of protectiveness you get. One problem I encountered when I was doing my [international] research, which is primarily [] looking at the museum collections in [another country]. They're very, very protective of their collections. They are not open. They don't have an open-door policy. So, I found it very difficult to ask to look at the comparable material because they want to be the ones that published that material. If it is unpublished, they don't want someone coming in from outside and doing it. (Interview G1.05)

On the UK national level, some such partnerships form the long-term national research infrastructures, such as in the case of legal deposit, in this case integrating both national libraries and universities -

Another partnership – with the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales and the Libraries of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Trinity College Dublin – lies at the heart of our single greatest endeavour in digital custodianship, the comprehensive collecting under Legal Deposit of the UK and Ireland’s output of born-digital content, including the archiving of the entire UK web. (BL 2015: 13)

As well as international and national collaborations, it is important to point out the growing area of collaborations between national institutions and regional GLAM institutions. Sometimes such collaborations are a part of dealing with the collections of national significance that are discovered or exhibited regionally, as in this example from the British Museum -

I suppose, more recently, it is not in my area, but there [was a large collection discovered] [redacted]. It actually ended up being acquired by [a regional museum], but the whole team of people needed to be put together to understand and research that set of material. (Interview G1.05)
In the case of Historic England, this type of regional collaboration expanded to a very close link with local authorities through their joint remits for the protection of historical environment and buildings -

*I mean, because of our role supporting, when we say it's supporting the sector, in many ways it's the local authority sector, it's the working, sort of, implementing historical environment protection, management, that whole area. So, a lot of our partnerships are with, for example, local authorities, it could be through ALGACO, so Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers. (Interview G3.01)*

Another level of collaboration is linked to regional loans of national collections, and more systemic programmes offered by the UK national cultural organisations to their regional partners as a help towards capacity building, often with a focus on their expertise and research functions. This is how such collaborations were described by a regional and university museum in the north of England -

*So, for somebody like the British Museum to show that they're working up in the [North] is good. It's good for them. We have two major partnerships with both the Natural History Museum and the British Museum, and that is fantastic. So, we partner up with the Natural History Museum through something called Real World Science, and we are actually leading on science teaching CPD on their behalf, as part of that network. So, our expertise in working with teachers, it's really great that they're acknowledging that, and we're leading on that part for the partnership. The British Museum were only here yesterday. We've got a partnership gallery with them. (Interview G3.04)*

As seen in this example, these new and more intense regional collaborations are likely to have impact both ways with regional museums having very clear expectations regarding the value of these partnerships –

*We really like them as partners. They're really good, and everyone at the British Museum is lovely, but the way they do their public programming needs to change, and they recognise that, that's why they were here yesterday. They're out there rethinking their national engagement and what it is that partners need from them, actually.*
So, what we're trying to do is to..., and in many ways we have to kind of nudge the nationals in this sense, because I think they're very good at sending objects out, and they're very good at providing networking opportunities, but what we want to do is now push those partnerships to additional benefit. So, we have talked about curatorial exchange. But also things like bringing the benefit of that partnership that we have them to our students, so how do we maximise the benefit for our student community, but also our schools community. We've talked about could they have curators Skyping into schools on our behalf, in partnership with us, and how our relationship with the nationals gives us political leverage locally, and how that can be. (Interview G3.04)

The similar examples can be seen in the library sector, especially through the British Library’s collaborative work with public libraries via the Living Knowledge Network, as described in its strategic document Living Knowledge for Everyone (2020) -

*The Library’s regional Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Network has been one of the great success stories of Living Knowledge, delivering job creation and growth through a growing network of centres based in public libraries across the UK, which help start-ups and small businesses with tailored information and advice. The Treasury investment in March 2020 in an expansion of the network to 20 regional centres (outside of London) and 90 local centres in libraries across England (in addition to an existing service in Glasgow) creates a unique opportunity to respond to the present crisis, urgently and at scale. (BL 2020: 5)*

The collaboration with the peer GLAM institutions on all levels – internationally, nationally and in their local context - is an important facet of the UK national cultural organisations. These collaborations are often focused on their research functions, often as a part of the need to understand their collections in relation to other similar collections across the globe. Sometimes these collaborations form significant new international and national research infrastructures, creating new national or international research facilities and services. In some instances, the new partnerships with other GLAM organisations arise as institutions are seeking to achieve broader societal and economic impacts in response to governmental policies, such as in the case of the growth
of regional collaborations. It is likely that the changes resulting from the collaborations such as these will also influence how institutions see and develop their research functions.

### 14.4.3 Widening collaboration potential

The UK national cultural organisations work with a great variety of partners. The complexity of all these relationships is impossible to fully describe in a short space available, as they vary on corporate and departmental levels, and are different for different disciplines and types of collections.

Technology based partnerships, especially those with private sector, are a growing and often a controversial area of partnership activity. For example, we have recently seen a number of institutions, including the British Museum, partnering with technology companies in the use of blockchain technologies and trading of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) (Valeonti et al. 2021). While NFTs will most likely turn to be a short-term distraction, institutional partnerships with private sector are already having a long-term impact on the future of research in the UK national cultural organisations. For example, the British Library and the National Archives have a long-term partnership with Find My Past, a private company working in family history market. This relationship has enabled digitisation of collections that would otherwise remain undigitised, such as newspapers at the British Library. The availability of this material has enabled new research, such as the Living with Machines project undertaken by the British Library and Alan Turing Institute. However, many researchers argue that the nature of such partnership is affecting and restricting access and infrastructure for digital research (Ahnert et. al. 2023). With the continuing squeezes on public funding, this is one area to watch, as institutions seek to continue developing such private partnerships, but also need find new ways to ensure their continued relevance for new types of digital research.

In some instances, the collaborations bring together more complex combination of partners, combining their resources and expertise in order to achieve more than they could do individually. One such example came from History England -
A very good example of a project that's worth having a look at in that side of things, was the Roman Rural Project. That was a big synthesis project, and that was funded by us, partly, and by the Leverhulme Trust and that was a huge project between the Reading University and Cotswold Archaeology, where they worked together and they went round taking all the grey literature form all the local authorities, brought it all together and then, the Reading University then, five or six of their research assistant went through it all and they basically created this all load of new synthesis on the understanding of rural Roman in England, and I think in Wales. So that's a partnership between Cotswold, the commercial, the academic, funded by the Leverhulme Trust… (Interview G3.01)

In another example from the V&A, an interviewee pointed to their collaboration with Wedgwood, in this case in the context of regional economic and cultural regeneration -

I suppose again I Tristram's intellectual agenda, and I imagine that it will bear fruit, again is very much about the interface between a museum collection and regional industry. That's what he’s…, I mean, with Stoke-on-Trent in the first instance because that's where he was MP, and he was very instrumental in Wedgwood relationship, like the V&A now looks after the whole Wedgwood collection. I think that was very much the path that brought him in, but also… (Interview G3.03)

The new strategic thinking in the UK national cultural institutions, especially in terms of their geographic expansion is often linked to the expectation of new partnership, as we can see in the V&A East project (Interview G3.03), or in relation to the British Library’s planned expansion in Leeds (BL 2020: 6).
15 Appendix E: British Library’s strategies 1985-2015

15.1 Organisational strategies overview

Figure 28 below shows a list of the British Library’s strategies used in this study, including dates of publications, dates covered by different strategies, the British Library CEOs and Chairs of the Board at the time of publication, as well as the British Library’s ‘home’ government department at the time of publication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>CEO</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Gov Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redefining the Library</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2005-08</td>
<td>Lynne Brindley</td>
<td>Colin Lucas 2006-2010</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Vision</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2010-20</td>
<td>Lynne Brindley</td>
<td>Tessa Blackstone 2010-18</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Knowledge</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2011-15</td>
<td>Lynne Brindley</td>
<td>Tessa Blackstone 2010-18</td>
<td>DCMS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 28 - British Library strategies overview 1985-2015
15.2 Purposes, function, mission, and vision

Figure 29 below shows how the British Library strategies expressed the organisation’s purposes, function, vision, and mission. A shorter version is presented in Chapter 7, see Figure 14 - Organisational purposes, vision and mission in the British Library Strategies 1985-2015. The definitions of the terms purpose, function, vision and mission changed in the corporate reporting conventions during this time, meaning that they do not always have exactly the same meaning, but it is still possible to make the broad comparisons. Also, the length afforded to these definitions is different in different documents. However, they all provide a valuable headline of how the organisations saw itself at different points in time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Purpose / Function</th>
<th>Mission / Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancing with Knowledge</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Dual purpose of being the nation's greatest source of information necessary for economic success and also an accessible repository of the knowledge and wisdom of the past which nourish the cognitive and affective parts of human nature.</td>
<td>To preserve, develop, exploit and promote the combined resources of its collections and facilities for reference, document supply, bibliographic, research, and other services for the best benefit, both now and in the future, of scholarship, research, industry, commerce and other major categories of information users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway to Knowledge</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The British Library has to be a leader - for the cause of books and for the love of learning, for other libraries and for information services. The statutory basis of the British Library, the range and strength of its collections and its ultimate responsibility for preserving the written record of the British people enable and require it to pursue initiatives on behalf of libraries and their users. The new British Library building at St Pancras will be a declaration of the continuing importance to the cultural and economic well-being of our society of the printed word; of the spirit of humane and liberal inquiry which guided our predecessors; of the application of modern methods and media to the communication of</td>
<td>Know our users’ needs and make our collections and services widely known; - build and preserve our collections, particularly of British material; - cultivate co-operation with others, in the public and private sectors, both in this country and abroad; - be enterprising and expert, alert to new opportunities, new ways and new technologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Purpose / Function</td>
<td>Mission / Vision</td>
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<td>information and ideas; of discovery, invention, scholarship and research. Our purpose is to advance knowledge:</td>
<td>Work towards establishing:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to give ready access to our collections and to other significant collections and databases;</td>
<td>- a single library, operating a single collection, based on two major sites at</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to pursue and promote research about the collection, preservation, communication and exploitation of</td>
<td>St Pancras and Boston Spa;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>knowledge.</td>
<td>- budgets for our core programmes in acquisitions, preservation and research grants</td>
</tr>
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<td>Our purpose is to advance knowledge:</td>
<td>at levels appropriate to our standing as a national library;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to give ready access to our collections in our reading rooms and by remote supply.</td>
<td>- as set of library services which offer maximum access through full use of new</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Our function is to serve scholarship, research and enterprise. Our purpose is to promote the advance of</td>
<td>technology, both on our own sites and over electronic networks, to other major</td>
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<td>knowledge through the communication of information and ideas. We celebrate and interpret our rich and</td>
<td>libraries and users;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>varied collections to encourage the broadest possible awareness and accessibility of the national's</td>
<td>- the Library as a major centre for the capture, storage and transmission of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>recorded heritage.</td>
<td>electronic documents;</td>
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<td>To achieve this:</td>
<td>- a programme of stimulating exhibitions and education programmes which widen</td>
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<td>- we identify and respond to our users' needs for a national library service;</td>
<td>access to the Library's rich and varied collections;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- we build, catalogue and conserve the collections;</td>
<td>- the Library as leader in the development of library systems and services;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- we provide entry to the world's knowledge base;</td>
<td>Continue to seek ways to exploit new sources of funds to support activities and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- we provide leadership and initiate cooperative programmes for the national and international library</td>
<td>ensure that Government funding is directed appropriately towards our priorities.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>community; and;</td>
<td>Objectives interlinked and dependent on information technology.</td>
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<td>- we exploit our collections in enterprising ways to raise support for our activities. We are committed to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>maintaining our position of leadership by embracing innovative, cost-effective and flexible methods of</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>working.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic objective for the year 2000</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>The British Library, through its incomparable collections, is the world's leading national research library. We have expert staff, and we give ready access to our collections in our reading rooms and by remote supply.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Purpose / Function</td>
<td>Mission / Vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic plan 1999-2002</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Library is a keystone of the UK academic infrastructure and an important resource for business and industry. It underpins developments in the environment, health, defence, and other priority policy areas for the nation. It enriches Britain’s cultural life and is one of the country's most important contributions to the world. It will be a powerhouse of the new ‘knowledge society’.</td>
<td>The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom and aims to be the world's leading resource for scholarship, research, and innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Strategic Directions</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>To foster pursuit of knowledge for the benefit of scholarship, research and innovation, and encourage the broadest possible awareness and accessibility of the Library's collections for the benefit of the citizen.</td>
<td>Making accessible the world's intellectual, scientific and cultural heritage. The collections of the British Library and other great collections will be accessible on everyone's virtual bookshelf - at work, at school, at college, at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefining the Library</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Helping people advance knowledge to enrich lives.</td>
<td>We play leading role in the changing world of research information. We exist for everyone who wants to do research - for academic, personal, or commercial purposes. We promote ready access to the British Library's collection and expertise through integrated services which are increasingly time and space dependent. We also connect with the collections and expertise of others, and work in partnership to fulfil our users' needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British Library's Strategy 2008-2011</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Advancing the world's knowledge</td>
<td>Vision: - We are central to the world of research, providing a trusted source of content that opens minds, solves problems and creates opportunities. - We provide services to anyone who wants to do research. We aim to provide both physical and digital access to world-class information where and when people need it. - We inspire people around the world with our outstanding content and expertise and we complement this by engaging the knowledge and expertise of others where it adds to the quality of experience for our users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Purpose / Function</td>
<td>Mission / Vision</td>
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</table>
| 2020 Vision       | 2010 | Advancing the world's knowledge          | Our vision: In 2020 the British Library will be a leading hub in the global information network, advancing knowledge through our collections, expertise and partnerships, for the benefit of the economy and society and the enrichment of cultural life. Our vision is supported by five key themes which set out the strategic priorities for the Library:  
1 Guarantee access for future generations.  
2 Enable access to everyone who wants to do research.  
3 Support research communities in key areas for social and economic benefit.  
4 Enrich the cultural life of the nation.  
5 Lead and collaborate in growing the world’s knowledge base. |

- By providing these services effectively, the British Library plays a vital role in society and the economy, both today and for future generations.  
- We are central to the world of research, providing a trusted source of content that open minds.  
Aims:  
- Provide researchers with a critical mass of digital content by extending our collecting of UK digital publications  
- Connect researchers with content in our collection and other resources in innovative ways.  
- Transform our service for researchers who need access to our unrivalled newspaper collection by implementing our newspaper strategy.  
- Support research by developing innovative products and services.  
- Secure our e-collection for future researchers by building robust systems to underpin our digital library.  
- Preserve our physical collection for future researchers by considering storage, security and preservation holistically.  
- Develop our staff to ensure they have the skills they need to deliver the strategy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Purpose / Function</th>
<th>Mission / Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing Knowledge</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Advancing the world's knowledge</td>
<td>Our vision: In 2020 the British Library will be a leading hub in the global information network, advancing knowledge through our collections, expertise and partnerships, for the benefit of the economy and society and the enrichment of cultural life. Our vision is supported by five key themes which set out the strategic priorities for the Library: 1 Guarantee access for future generations. 2 Enable access to everyone who wants to do research. 3 Support research communities in key areas for social and economic benefit. 4 Enrich the cultural life of the nation. 5 Lead and collaborate in growing the world’s knowledge base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Knowledge</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>The British Library purposes: 1 Custodianship We build, curate and preserve the UK’s national collection of published, written and digital content 2 Research We support and stimulate research of all kinds 3 Business We help businesses to innovate and grow 4 Culture We engage everyone with memorable cultural experiences 5 Learning We inspire young people and learners of all ages 6 International We work with partners around the world to advance knowledge and mutual understanding</td>
<td>We make our intellectual heritage accessible to everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15.3 Objectives

Figure 30 below shows the British Library's objectives listed in the organisational strategies. In some instances, this includes two or more levels of gradually more detailed objectives. Figure 30 also captures this second level of objectives where applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Objectives, Level 1</th>
<th>Objectives, Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancing with Knowledge</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1. to ensure the availability of a comprehensive and permanent repository of recorded British material in all fields, published or otherwise.</td>
<td>- Acquisition budget to be protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. to ensure the availability of that foreign material which serves the needs at the national level for reference, study and information services.</td>
<td>- Rationalisation of common stock between different constituent parts.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. to provide a centralised document supply service.</td>
<td>- New collecting policies to be published, and to be used for closer collaboration with other libraries nationally and internationally.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. to provide the fullest possible range of information, bibliographic and other services to give effective access to the collections.</td>
<td>- Continue to acquire heritage items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. to create, distribute, and provide access to bibliographic records giving a comprehensive and continuous account of British and foreign publications.</td>
<td>- Develop five-year preservation strategy as the problem is significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. to keep abreast of other library, archive and information resources both at home and abroad, and to establish such co-operative arrangements that will give users direct access or other appropriate reference to the widest possible range of material.</td>
<td>- Need to extend legal deposit to non-book materials - films, sound recordings, video, in cooperation with others. Particularly strong case for the development of the Library's role as the national archival centre for electronic publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. to identify priority needs for research and development in library, information and related activities; to provide support in these areas through funding research and demonstration projects; and to disseminate the results of research.</td>
<td>- Enhanced services for science and industry, especially innovation, new materials, biomedical science, computer search service, conference and publishing programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Extending services in the humanities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Developing electronic document supply service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Expanding bibliographic services, automated bibliographic services via BLAISE.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Supporting key research through the Research and Development Department, maintain level of resource.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Keep up international involvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 1</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 2</td>
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<td>8. to assist those other libraries which are well placed to contribute significantly and at reasonable cost to the national collections as these are envisaged in 1 and 2 above.</td>
<td>- Restructure - introducing Director Generals for Humanities and Social Sciences and for Science and Technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 1</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway to Knowledge</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>In the Year 2000 The Library will:</td>
<td>In the reading rooms at Sta Pancras we shall:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Be a gateway to knowledge (operating from two sites St Pancras and Boston Spa, integrated services</td>
<td>- provide on-line access for users to our own and other libraries’ catalogues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and unified collection, co-operating in the UK and internationally).</td>
<td>- deliver books to readers much faster than at present.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- At St Pancras better services for scholars, scientists, businessmen and librarians, heritage stored</td>
<td>- subject on only to necessary minimum of security, enable readers to order and receive in the reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>in controlled conditions, online access to catalogues, faster delivery of material.</td>
<td>room of their choice materials from any part of the collection without imposing unnecessary</td>
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<td>- New services and new standards (added value information services, faster document supply, lead in</td>
<td>organisational barriers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the integration of networks for information providers, Centre for the Book for creative writers,</td>
<td>- draw our collections curators into more direct responsibility of providing reading room services</td>
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<td>publishers and scholars of bibliography</td>
<td>and answering readers’ enquiries.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- for general visitor - imaginative exhibition programme, education service, general events</td>
<td>Furthermore we shall.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The overriding emphasis will be on improved services to our traditional users, that is to the scholarly</td>
<td>- offer a growing range of information services which add value by the integration and analysis of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and research community in the humanities and the sciences, to the information specialists in business</td>
<td>data.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and industry, and to other libraries.</td>
<td>- provide and external document supply service which, taking full advantage of new technology,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The strategy of the 1990s will be to achieve comprehensive access to recorded knowledge rather than</td>
<td>is swifter and more comprehensive than now.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>comprehensiveness of collections; our goal will be to guide users swiftly and accurately to the</td>
<td>- take a lead in the integration of networks of information providers.</td>
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<td>information they need. We shall achieve this through a redefined national bibliographic service.</td>
<td>- through the Centre for the Book, provide a focus for our relationships with scholars of bibliography,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information technology will be central in giving access to library catalogues and other sources of</td>
<td>with creative writers, with publishers, and all who enjoy books.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>information.</td>
<td>- For the wider public, we shall exploit the increased space and much improved facilities at St</td>
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<td>Pancras for exhibitions and education services t run a lively and imaginative general events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>programme and to provide a front-of-the-house public information service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 1</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic objective for the year 2000</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>By the Year 2000:</td>
<td>In order to achieve these objectives:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The British Library will operate as a single library from its two principal sites. Whether in the reading rooms or at remote location, users will have the same access to the collection via automated catalogue.</td>
<td>- The Library will actively investigate its users' needs and develop and improve services in response.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- It will be a major centre for the storage of, and access to, digital texts required for research.</td>
<td>- It will modify its use of resources as appropriate and seek new sources of funds.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- It will achieve the funding necessary to allow it to restore budgets for its core programmes in acquisition, preservation and research to levels appropriate to its standing as a national library.</td>
<td>- It will obtain greater cooperation with other national and research libraries and providers of information in Europe and the USA. It will operate at the centre of the UK library and information network.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- It will maximise use of its reading rooms by providing ready access and prompt and convenient services. Readers in the reading rooms will be able to consult items in the collections wherever they are housed.</td>
<td>- It will encourage the broadest awareness of the nation's recorded heritage.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- It will significantly expand remote document supply both in the UK and overseas. It will seek to avoid the need for users to visit the reading rooms when their requirements can best be met by remote supply.</td>
<td>Our ultimate aim is to be able to supply to the remote user text, sound and visual images from all parts of the collection and from all information services within the Library. To achieve this, we must invest in the Library's cataloguing infrastructure and complete the coverage of automation of cataloguing and processing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- It will make remote document supply as fast and cheap as possible by exploiting digital storage and electronic transmission.</td>
<td>Contributes over £8m annually in overseas earnings. Attracts overseas visitors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We shall continue to support industry, business and higher education through the provision of relevant information services and publications, taking advantage of technological advances.

Our commercial expertise in packaging and selling information is growing and will be encouraged; but if the Library is to be fully competitive in the volatile world market for such services it needs to seek partner from the private
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Objectives, Level 1</th>
<th>Objectives, Level 2</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>sector and from other organisations, both to share the capital risk, and to ensure valid commercial assessments of the market opportunities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We shall develop the Library as a major cultural resource. We shall broaden the awareness, appreciation and accessibility of the nation's recorded heritage, of which we are the custodian. - to attract a million visitors to St Pancras every year, exhibition programme, travelling exhibitions, Centre for the Book Education programme to support teachers in schools and adult learning R&amp;D - ensure that financial provision for external research is adequate, look for jointly funded projects. Comprehensive collecting across all disciplines, restore the value of acquisition budget. Investment in preservation. Library as scholarly institution - high priority instaff recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 1</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic plan 1999 - 2002</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Submitted to the Government:</td>
<td>In planning for 1999-2002 the Library has therefore decided to:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- maintain free access to its reading rooms: our users of today said that this remains vital</td>
<td>- attach greater importance to the development and management of its collection than to the improvement of services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- spend more on acquisitions and conservation: to maintain the quality of the Library’s collection for our users of today and of the future</td>
<td>- include digital works as an integral part of its collection</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- place a high priority on collecting digital materials and developing digital library services: to ensure our users can consult new forms of publication, and can benefit from the new means of access available through digital and networking technologies</td>
<td>- give higher priority to grant-in-aid support for services for scholarship, research, and innovation than for services for a wider public audience</td>
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<td>- forge new partnerships with other institutions, particularly in the higher education sector: we recognise the increasing need to work closely with other libraries to optimise use of resources, provide complementary collections and services, and minimise duplication</td>
<td>- attach greater importance to the provision of documents through reading rooms and remote supply than to information services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- make a major contribution towards the achievement of key Government objectives: we will support learning in the widest sense and provide access to knowledge and information for all who need to use our collection</td>
<td>- refocus its cooperation and partnership activities onto collection development, record creation, preservation, access, and the national bibliography</td>
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<td>- strive to increase revenue-generating opportunities and efficiencies still further</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 1</td>
<td>Objectives, Level 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Strategic Directions</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td><strong>User focus:</strong></td>
<td>- A leading role in digitisation, digital collecting and long-term preservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Interact effectively with our users to maximise the fitness for purpose and value of what the Library provides.</td>
<td>- Existing services will be reshaped in a digital and more decentralised, or distributed, way. Opportunities to develop them will be sought in alliances, partnerships and new types of commercial ventures.</td>
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<td>- Extend our user base by enhancing the relevance and accessibility of services.</td>
<td>- Library as a part of a distributed network of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Partnerships:</strong></td>
<td>- Continue to press for the new legal deposit legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Initiate and maintain effective partnerships with organisation which have a stake in our activities.</td>
<td>- Take lead in negotiating with the US for MARC21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Enable all organisations concerned to achieve more in partnership than they could do on their own.</td>
<td>- Key role in the Digital Preservation Coalition</td>
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<td><strong>The Web:</strong></td>
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<td>- Migrate our traditional service offerings to the Web wherever appropriate, in accordance with users' requirements.</td>
<td>Our users:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Provide new services which we could not offer without the Web.</td>
<td>- Scholars, researchers, innovators, lifelong learners and other information seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>- Increase our user base via the Web.</td>
<td>- The general public, including schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Collections strategy:</strong></td>
<td>- The national and international library network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ensure improved coverage of the UK's National Published Archive.</td>
<td>- Our overriding priority will continue to be in support of the researcher/information seeker. We will concentrate on developing high quality information services, resource discovery tools and Web packages.</td>
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<td>- Increase our collecting of digital material.</td>
<td>Digital resources:</td>
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<td>- Focus on user needs and develop greater collaborating with other libraries in collecting, preserving and providing access to material.</td>
<td>- We are working closely with publishers to safeguard their interests while developing our remote document supply services to provide digital materials held in the Library and to link to those available through publishers' websites.</td>
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<td><strong>Access Strategy:</strong></td>
<td>- Focus on licensing and digitisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Make the Library's collections more accessible to users.</td>
<td>- Document Supply: 'at a critical point in its history and is experiencing rapid and unpredictable change'</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reshape those services for which there are alternative sources of supply.</td>
<td>- Reshape patent provision, Working Party gave a range of recommendations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Contribute to the effectiveness of library provision within the UK.</td>
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<td>- Develop as part of global network of libraries.</td>
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<td>- Extend opportunities for enjoyment and learning offered by the Library.</td>
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<td>Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redefining the Library</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td><strong>Enrich the user's experience:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Defining the British Library's role in the research Information cycle:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Enhance the Reading Room experience</td>
<td>- Creating knowledge through research</td>
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<td>- Open up the Library through the power of the web</td>
<td>- Publishing and disseminating research outputs</td>
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<td>- Make the Library's collection and services easier to use</td>
<td>- Aggregating research information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Become one of London's most distinctive and important cultural venues</td>
<td>- Enabling search and navigation</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Build the digital research environment:</strong></td>
<td>- Helping people access information</td>
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<td>- Develop the National Digital Library as a key part of the UK's research e-infrastructure</td>
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<td>- Work with others to shape the national research e-infrastructure</td>
<td><strong>STM:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Transform search and navigation:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Science:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adopt new resource discovery technologies</td>
<td>- physical and digital resources, small number of other players, LSE, Social Data Service, strength of grey literature, includes practitioner communities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Aim for best practice in our catalogues</td>
<td><strong>Arts and humanities:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Embed efficiencies in our handling of incoming materials</td>
<td>- Digital less important, new methods and interdisciplinarity, digitisation, 21st century curators</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grow and manage the national collection:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Our Audiences:</strong> Researchers, Business people, the library network, schools and young people, the general public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Implement electronic legal deposit</td>
<td><strong>Our government stakeholders:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Refine our collection development strategy for non-legal deposit materials</td>
<td><strong>DCMS:</strong></td>
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<td>- Develop innovative physical storage to cater for the continuing increase in printed publications</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Establish a world class conservation facilities for library materials</td>
<td>- We contribute to the Department's cultural enrichment, lifelong learning and social inclusion</td>
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<td><strong>Develop our people:</strong></td>
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<td>- Become an employer of choice</td>
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<td>Guarantee financial sustainability:</td>
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<td>- Maximise our efficiency in line with the Gershon Report</td>
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<td>- Ensure we have the resources we need to deliver our strategy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Review the business model for Document Supply</td>
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<td>- Implement a two-site estates strategy</td>
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<td>Department for Education and Skills:</td>
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<td>- We support the higher education objectives of the Department for Education and Skills by supporting academic research across all subjects. We also work to develop research skills among school students and lifelong learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of Science and Technology:</td>
<td></td>
<td>- As a central resource in the national research infrastructure we support the Department of Trade and Industry and the Office of Science and Technology. In particular, we help to sustain leadership in world-class research and innovation and thereby promote the UK in the competitive global economy.</td>
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<td>HM Treasury:</td>
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<td>- Our Economic Impact Assessment study (2003) indicated that the Library delivered £4.40 of direct and indirect value to the UK economy for every £1 of public investment.</td>
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| The British Library's Strategy 2008-2011 | 2007 | Strategic Priority 1: Capture extensively and store UK digital publications:  
- Continue to collect offline digital items, e-journals and publicly available web content.  
- Extend collecting to other digital formats.  
- Benchmark progress against international peers.  
Strategic Priority 2: Connect our users with content:  
- Acquire and implement a new state of the art resource discovery system.  
- Roll out the Integrated Archives and Manuscripts system.  
- Explore digitisation and full text searching as alternatives to traditional cataloguing.  
- Connect national discovery and delivery services more effectively in partnership with the JISC and Research Libraries UK.  
- Participate in the JISC's Libraries of the Future campaign.  
- Set up work to enhance our catalogues.  
Strategic Priority 3: Transform access and preservation for newspapers:  
- Plan construction of a purpose-built facility at Boston Spa.  
- Begin collection moves of 150km of newspapers to Boston Spa.  
- Develop a strategy to digitise the most highly used and important parts of the newspaper collection.  
- Collect contemporary digital newspapers by establishing voluntary deposit arrangements with publishers.  
Strategic Priority 4: Support UK research with innovative services and integrated processes:  
- Offer shared, integrated storage and access for library services in higher education. | Strategic Priority 1:  
- Have arrangements in place for collecting, storing and preserving public websites and handheld e-publications.  
- Have worked through the Legal Deposit Advisory Panel to provide the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport with the best information to reach a decision.  
- Put voluntary schemes in place where regulation is inappropriate or not yet achieved.  
- Digital access to material held both within and beyond the Library.  
- Establish best practice for e-collecting, tracked against developments in other countries.  
- Explore digitisation and full text searching as alternatives to traditional cataloguing.  
- Integrate operational processes for ingest, storage and access.  
Strategic Priority 2:  
- Have our new resource discovery system in place, offering enhanced access to our major collections.  
- Have integrated Web 2.0 services into our website and online discovery tools.  
- Integrate discovery for more of our digital content.  
- Provide better search results for users and greater digital access to material held both within and beyond the Library.  
Strategic Priority 3:  
- Have the migration of newspapers from Colindale to Boston Spa well under way. Work in partnership with the research councils on interdisciplinary themes in Social Sciences and Science, Technology and Medicine.  
- Have moved many high use magazines and periodicals to St Pancras. |
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<tr>
<td>- Determine how we will contribute to continuing work to provide an e-infrastructure of support UK research.</td>
<td>- Make a growing volume of microfilm and digitised content available at St Pancras and, where appropriate, online.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Further develop UK PubMed Central.</td>
<td>- Have transferred legal deposit operations to Boston Spa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Work in partnership with the research councils on interdisciplinary themes in Social Sciences and STM.</td>
<td>- Store the first phase of newspapers at Boston Spa in archival conditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Beta test the Research Information Centre.</td>
<td>Strategic Priority 4:</td>
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<td>- Determine, in collaboration with the research councils and the higher education community, our role in facilitating discovery and access to datasets.</td>
<td>- Deliver a central repository that underpins UK higher education research by offering improved and streamlined access to information resources.</td>
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<td>Strategic Priority 5: Build our Digital Infrastructure:</td>
<td>- Develop new services for commercial users to enhance our future sustainability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Continue to build our digital library system.</td>
<td>archival conditions.</td>
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<td>- Work with the other legal deposit libraries to share legal deposit content.</td>
<td>Strategic Priority 5:</td>
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<td>- Consolidate our IT architecture to reduce the number and complexity of legacy systems.</td>
<td>- Have a more robust, fully functioning infrastructure in place for acquiring, storing, preserving and providing access to digital items.</td>
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<td>- Manage IP rights effectively.</td>
<td>- Be using systems able to recognise both unique items and different versions of the same item (e.g. blogs) and preserve them appropriately.</td>
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<td>- Enable long-term preservation of digital items.</td>
<td>- Have metadata incorporating rights information to authorise users and protect content.</td>
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<td>Strategic Priority 6: Integrate storage and preservation of physical collections:</td>
<td>- Promote Planets outputs, including the long-term preservation framework, preservation toolkit and testbed facility, to the wider community. Adopt Planets outputs within the British Library.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Complete the new storage building at Boston Spa.</td>
<td>Strategic Priority 6:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Update our property strategy.</td>
<td>- Have made significant progress towards becoming a two-site operation (we currently occupy six sites) with associated efficiencies.</td>
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<td>- Conduct a wide-ranging risk assessment of physical collections and plan to mitigate risks identified.</td>
<td>- Establish fully the Centre for Conservation as a national centre of excellence.</td>
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<td>- Further enhance the security of the collection.</td>
<td>- Align models for stewardship of digital and physical collections, enabling integrated management of storage and preservation of our entire collection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Investigate digital copying as an alternative to microfilm for long-term preservation.</td>
<td>- Develop culture change initiatives.</td>
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<td>Strategic Priority 7: Develop as an organisation:</td>
<td>- Undertake a review of our Scholarship and Collections Directorate.</td>
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|          |      | - Address succession planning.  
|          |      | - Raise our profile.       | - Understand properly the benefits of digital files as a preservation medium, paving the way for a future switch from microfilm copying. |
|          |      | Strategic Priority 7:  
|          |      | - Be a high performing organisation with a focus on delivering innovation, collaborative working and continuous improvement.  
|          |      | - Be recognised as an employer of choice, having diverse staff who are highly motivated, creative and flexible.  
<p>|          |      | - Combine strong employer branding and web-based recruitment to support delivery of services to UK research and innovation. |</p>
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<tr>
<td>2020 Vision (vision rather than strategic document)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1: Guarantee access for future generations:</td>
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<td>Collect, store and preserve for the long-term step-change increase in digital material:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Collect UK physical and digital materials through legal deposit, in line with the 2003 Legal Deposit Libraries Act and anticipated regulations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Collect, store and preserve user-generated content that provides insight into 21st century life, such as personal digital archives, institutional repositories, blogs, wikis and new forms of content that may emerge</td>
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<td>- Collect digital content as the format of choice, actively making the print to digital transition.</td>
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<td>As well as continuing our focus on collecting books and journals, we will aim to:</td>
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<td>- Ensure a coherent national approach is taken to collect and preserve audio-visual content</td>
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<td>- Maximise the discoverability and availability of datasets</td>
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<td>- Continue to provide long-term stewardship of our rich physical collections and our growing digital collections, ensuring their security and resilience</td>
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<td>- Continue the transition to collecting and connecting by establishing collaborative stewardship arrangements with other national libraries and memory institutions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2: Enable access to everyone who wants to do research:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Digitise a significant proportion of our out-of-copyright content, in partnership, focusing on content, which is rare, unique and important to our heritage</td>
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<tr>
<td>1: Improve the user experience:</td>
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<td>Make out-of-copyright digitised content widely accessible independent of location, in ways and on devices that our users choose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage others to integrate our out-of-copyright digitised content into their services, enabling users to create new insights and innovations from our content through re-use, and creating economic benefits for the UK</td>
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<td>Establish partnership models for licensing of digital content outside the Reading Rooms, respecting the rights of creators, supporting the commercial interests of publishers and achieving multimedia access for users</td>
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<td>Provide an advanced search and discovery experience for users, developed in partnership with commercial providers and other key players.</td>
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<td>2: Support learning:</td>
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<td>3: Support research communities in the key areas of social and economic benefit:</td>
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<td>Provide tailored services, in partnership, for researchers in focused areas which: Demonstrate a clear need for public service; Provide a major contribution to innovation, economic output or social value; Enable us, together with our partners, to demonstrate significant capability and competency in provision, and to add significant value.</td>
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<td>Undertake continuous measurement of our performance in offering tailored services so that we can recalibrate our services accordingly.</td>
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<td>4: Enrich the cultural life of the nation:</td>
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<td>Digitise our rare and unique collections, enrich them with the expertise of our specialist curators and community of users,</td>
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|          |      | and make them more widely accessible on digital platforms for everyone in the world to appreciate and enjoy  
- Provide access to the collection through vibrant and interactive experiences, both online and onsite  
- Develop, in partnership, new collaborative virtual and physical public spaces  
- Engage in 'crowd-sourcing' initiatives that involve our users, staff and other knowledge organisations.  

5: Lead and collaborate in growing the world's knowledge base:  
- Lead debates, champion agendas and provide guidance and advocacy to the international information community in strategy and policy, information standards, planning, business models, preservation and digitisation  
- Use our trusted brand, authoritative voice and neutral position to bring organisations together for the benefit of research  
- Engage in significant international cultural diplomacy efforts through the exchange of ideas and information, and by developing capability and capacity in other national libraries and research institutions  
- Engage in a range of partnership models |
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<tr>
<td>Growing Knowledge (strategy for 2020 vision)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1: Guarantee access for future generations - Implement voluntary and statutory deposit arrangements for born digital content - Review our content strategy to ensure our content meets the needs of researchers - Develop and utilise our digital library infrastructure for storing and preserving digital materials - Transform preservation of the newspaper collection - Continue to provide long-term stewardship of our rich print collections - Develop selective collaborative stewardship arrangements to collect and connect to content in line with our refreshed content strategy 2: Enable access to everyone who wants to do research - Transform access to newspapers - Provide British Library Readers with multimedia content - Encourage others to integrate our materials into their services - Devise and implement an updated plan for digitisation of our collections - Provide better search results for users and greater access to material - Develop an integrated view of our customers and provide increased opportunities and incentives for registration - Support customers who are on the move by implementing delivery of content and services through mobile devices - Online access to licensed digital resources - Champion the importance of datasets in scholarly communication across all disciplines</td>
<td>Focus effort on essential activities: - We attach greatest weight to those activities which represent our statutory remit to make accessible the nation’s and the world’s storehouse of recorded knowledge, both now and in the future. - We will use Grant in Aid first and foremost in support of those activities. - We will provide tailored services for researchers in focused areas to the extent to which we are able to work in partnership and obtain external funding. - We will use Grant in Aid to help us maintain our programme of public engagement and support for learners, but we will endeavour to supplement Grant in Aid support as far as possible by other funding sources for this. - We will look to develop our leadership and collaborative approaches to enhance our offerings. Implementation priorities: - Achieve regulations enabling implementation of the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 - Manage the ingest and storage of voluntary and legal deposit content - Develop the Library’s digital infrastructure I Open a state-of-the-art facility for storage of physical newspapers - Develop selective collaborative stewardship arrangements to collect and connect to content - Digitise up to 20 million pages from the Library’s newspaper collection in partnership with brightsolid - Establish, in partnership, at least one major new large-scale digitisation initiative in addition to our newspaper digitisation initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: Support research communities in key areas for social and economic benefit</td>
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<td>- Secure the financial future of the Business &amp; IP Centre (BIPC) to ensure continued support to small business - Agree the priority audience segments and develop added value propositions to support them</td>
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<tr>
<td>4: Enrich the cultural life of the nation</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Improve user experience on the British Library website and increase traffic and reach - Continue to deliver a stimulating and engaging public programme both onsite and online - Maintain our well-respected onsite learning programme, while further developing and enhancing our on- line resources to increase reach and engagement - Deepen user engagement and enrich our content through piloting and embedding digital collaborative initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>5: Lead and collaborate in growing the world’s knowledge base</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop strategic partnerships and collaborative arrangements - Develop and embed innovative public-private partnership arrangements - Work with a range of sectors to generate cost savings through shared service initiatives - Continue to engage in significant international cultural diplomacy efforts - Continue to provide leadership and be a role model in the national and international library and information network - Lead debates and provide guidance and advocacy to the international information community</td>
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<td>- Obtain agreements from publishers to provide access to licensed materials offsite through a range of models.</td>
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| Living Knowledge    | 2015 | **Custodianship:**  
- Address the growing preservation and access challenges for our historic audio and recorded music collections  
- Work with our UK Non-Print Legal Deposit partners to develop the national collection of born-digital content and ensure its long-term preservation  
- Develop our collection management capacity at Boston Spa in Yorkshire to offer shared services that help deliver efficiencies for other public organisations.  
**Research:**  
- Ensure that the Library’s on-site facilities and Reading Room services keep pace with the changing needs of researchers  
- Develop our remote access services to become a trusted and indispensable resource for fact finding, research and analysis for researchers everywhere  
- Leverage the Library’s collections and expertise to drive innovation in large-scale data analytics, for the wider benefit of UK research  
- Work with partners to increase the Library’s capacity as an independent research organisation.  
**Business:**  
- Work with partners to secure funding to grow the network of regional Business & IP Centres to a total of 20 UK city libraries  
- Develop and open up our St Pancras campus to maximise its potential for knowledge exchange and innovation at the heart of the Knowledge Quarter. |
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| Culture: |      | - Grow the profile, diversity and creative impact of the Library’s cultural activities, both on-site and online.  
|          |      | - Develop an increased programme of loans, touring exhibitions and digital collaborations, with public libraries and others, that open our collections to new audiences across the UK and internationally.  
| Learning:|      | - Improve and expand our on-site capacity to grow the numbers of school students, young people, families and local communities able to engage with our collections.  
|          |      | - Expand the range of teaching resources and primary source material available online.  
| International: | | - Increase our engagement in those regions of the world, including South Asia and the Middle East, whose cultures and histories are reflected most strongly in the Library’s collections.  
|          |      | - Take a professional leadership role in the national library network of Europe to contribute to the development of a global distributed digital library.  
|          |      | - Grow our capacity to support other institutions whose collections are at risk from war or civil emergency.  

Figure 30 - British Library strategies 1985-2015 - Objectives
15.4 Finance and KPIs

The British Library strategies do not tend to include detailed financial sections, which were usually presented in detail in the Library’s Annual Reports. However, some key financial information used for strategic planning is sometimes included.

KPIs and measures of achievements are not present in all documents. In some strategic documents they tend to be generic, with more detailed deliverables are listed in the implementation strategies and grant-in-aid funding agreement letters. Figure 31 captures only financial and KPI information that was included in the British Library strategic documents.

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| Advancing with Knowledge        | 1985 | - Grant-in-aid confirmed for all except 21.5% of income derived from commercial activities.  
                                   |      | - Planning 5% annual growth in earned income. But also seeks stable, long-term income.  
                                   |      | - Public good and value-added concepts behind charging. Charging for reading rooms considered and dismissed.  
<pre><code>                               |      | - Annual cost £60m. 2,500 staff.                                      |
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| Gateway to Knowledge     | 1989 | - Grant-in-aid to continue to fall, as it has been for the past 10 years.  
- Raise revenue to £7.5m, new initiatives, but that will not fully compensate.  
- Main earners - Doc Supply and Bibliographic Services working in constrained public sector markets, price sensitive, competitive international markets.  
- Financial pressure to occupy St Pancras. It should be met by Government.  
- Research library budgets shrunk, greater dependence on British Library.  
- Cuts to acquisitions and preservation planned, which will be damaging.  
- The new investment in technology estimated at £13m over 5 years.  
- Relocation of jobs from London to Yorkshire.  
- Efficiencies - rationalising London estate, review of admin, of acquisitions.  
- Fundraising: Adopt a Book Wolfson, Mellon, National Heritage Memorial Fund.  
- Projecting the need for growing public and private funding over five years.  
- The Board looked into charging for reading rooms and rejected it.  
- Seeking sponsorship for the main exhibitions.  
- Computerisation of the Catalogue identified as a key project.  
- 'Common stock' policy to be implemented.  
- Centralisation of planning processes and financial management.  
- Efficiency reviews - pricing policy external consultants, acquisitions and retention internal. | - Bloomsbury reading rooms 200,000 readers, Document Supply 3.25m requests.  
- Combined revenue of Document Supply and Patent Express Service £10m. Publishing turnover £4m a year, £250k surplus.  
- Raising revenue from 20% to 25% achieved - document supply, subscription-based Business Information Services at SRIS, BL Consultancy Services.  
- Royalty free user licencing regime for British Library MARC.  
- Entered JANET and engaged with other JANET users including the Consortium of University Research Libraries.  
- Cooperative automation group for bibliographic services.  
- Cooperation with private sector for CIP programme.  
- Bibliography on CD-ROM with other European libraries.  
- Microfilming as preservation solution, funded by Mellon.  
- National Conservation fund set up by the Library and the Royal Historical Manuscripts Commission with the financial support from the Office of Arts and Libraries. |
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<td>Strategic objective for the year 2000</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>- Financial uncertainties remain.</td>
<td>- Vital contribution to national economy. Underpins academic activity and scholarship in the UK.</td>
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<td>- 30% of income from priced services.</td>
<td>- Contributes over £8m annually in overseas earnings. Attracts overseas visitors.</td>
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<td>- Reading rooms to remain free.</td>
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<td>- Partnering and cooperation as a way of dealing with insufficient resources.</td>
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<td>- Additional investment needed £28m or £3.5m annually over eight years for the planned initiatives.</td>
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<td>- 10 years of reducing grant in aid and costs of move to St Pancras have a major impact.</td>
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<td>- More revenue from priced services important, to be organised as business units.</td>
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<td>- Storage - to run out of space in 1999, necessity to retain land at St Pancras, estate investment St Pancras and Boston Spa</td>
<td>- Service delivery targets set:</td>
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<td>- satisfy 95% of document supply requests</td>
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<td>- 85% reading room occupancy</td>
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<td>- Online Catalogue to give access to 80% of our printed book and audio-visual materials</td>
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<td>- 400,000 readers in the reading rooms, 20% from overseas,</td>
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<td>- 5m items consulted</td>
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<td>- 4m requests to doc supply</td>
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<td>- 200 research projects supported</td>
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<td>- 1176 seats at St Pancras, 6.5% increase, 66% occupancy.</td>
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<td>Strategic plan 1999-2002</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>- The overall level of grant-in-aid available to the Library fell in real terms by 10% over the five-year period 1994-99, this understates the scale of the decline in funding for ongoing core library operations. If costs associated with the move to St Pancras are taken into account there was a 20% fall in net operational expenditure.</td>
<td>- It provides internationally important reading room services, mainly from its new headquarters building at St Pancras in London, and the world's leading document supply services, mainly from its northern site at Boston Spa in Yorkshire.</td>
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<td>- At the same time the Library had to meet growing demand. The Library responded by improving its efficiency.</td>
<td>- It provides essential support services for the UK library community, a range of services for the general public, and attracts substantial usage by customers from overseas.</td>
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<td>- However, acquisitions and conservation spending was cut, and therefore the quality of the Library's collection, were hit by the continuing constraints.</td>
<td>- While the Library receives substantial Government funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, it is unique among national libraries in earning over 25% of its annual gross expenditure from the sale of products and services.</td>
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<td>- The British Library Board presented the findings of</td>
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<td>the strategic review to Government in autumn 1998, highlighting users' concerns that the Library should reverse the erosion of spending on acquisitions and conservation. The Library is grateful to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport that he was subsequently able to announce an improvement in the Library's grant-in-aid for the next three financial years. Library's grant-in-aid expenditure on acquisitions fell from £15m to £10m in the five-year period 1994-99, a drop of over 30%. Meanwhile, escalation in monograph and serial prices was far above the increase in the Retail Price Index. Now to increase after the grant-in-aid has lifted. Also, £1m more for preservation. - For wider public services to seek additional sources of funding. - 1998 CSR enabled museums greater financial and managerial freedoms for fundraising and to develop an investment fund.</td>
<td>- The cornerstone of the UK Higher Education and research infrastructure and 60% of our work is in support of this sector.' - 'A wealth-creating resource for business and industry and 20% of our activity underpins commercial development and innovation.' - 'A key element in Britain's cultural life and 15% of our work is in support of public library activities.' - 4m items consulted in meeting rooms</td>
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| Redefining the Library | 2004 | Our Grant in Ad from DCMS was £91.6m in 2004-05. Our trading income was £23m in 2004-05. | - 4m items sent out via Document Supply - 70% science and technology, 10% for social sciences, 20% for humanities.  
- Catalogue on the web most used service.  
Generic KPIs or each strategic priority:  
- Reshape our St Pancras Reading Room service to suit the needs of people researching in different ways; for example, to support collaborative projects and team work in spaces adjacent to reading rooms.  
- Pioneer development of the Digital Library to provide sophisticated storage, preservation and access to the nation's digital content.  
- Play a leading role in developing new resource discovery tools tailored to researchers’ needs.  
- Work with other stakeholders to progress the necessary secondary legislation for electronic legal deposit.  
- Build effective leadership at all levels to help us embrace change.  
- Continue to modernise our organisation to free up resources for our strategic priorities.  
- In 2005-06 we will deliver efficiencies of £7.6m, which includes both new savings and redistribution of resources to our core activities and front-line services.  
- Rationalise London estate with Woolwich and Colindale to go by 2010. |
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| The British Library's Strategy 2008-2011 | 2007 | The Government recognised the excellence of the British Library and its contribution to research, culture and the UK economy when it awarded a rise in funding in line with the Treasury definition of 'inflation' for the three-year period 2008-2011. We will continue to supplement our public funding through fundraising and trading activities. Legacies, donations and other grants currently account for 4% of the Library's total income. In the period 2008-11, we will launch a campaign in which we will seek to double our income from fundraising, in particular for digital developments. LDA funding of £2.4m for BIPC. | - We have delivered an efficiency programme in line with Government targets achieving efficiencies of £12.1 million in 2005/06 (5% over target), £15.9 million in 2006/07 (20% over target) and £18.26 million in 2007/08 (31% over target).  
- We have made substantial progress on our Additional Storage Programme at Boston Spa which will deliver 262km of new storage.  
- We have put in place a strategy for resource discovery, working with a range of external product vendors to explore new methods. The Library’s Single Entry Point went live early in 2007. A range of digital materials received through voluntary deposit can now be viewed in the Reading Rooms, through a pilot project to offer access to digital items.  
- We have put arrangements in place to advance implementation of legal deposit infrastructure for electronic publications, through a node at the National Library of Wales.  
- We have increased our focus on disciplines in line with researcher needs through the development of the content strategy for Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences.  
- We have also developed a mission statement and broad strategy for Science, Technology and Medicine (STM) and work to implement the STM strategy has begun.  
- In partnership with the Joint Information Systems Committee we have digitised 4,000 hours of archival sound recordings and one million pages of historic British newspapers, |
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| 2020 Vision (vision rather than strategic document) | 2010 | The Library is primarily funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with significant self-generated commercial income, and makes an important contribution to DCMS’s key objectives. In supporting and sustaining both the research excellence of the UK and its commercial competitiveness, we contribute also to the objectives of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. | which are available online to higher and further education users.  
- We opened our state of the art Centre for Conservation in spring 2007 following a successful fund raising campaign. The Centre provides the best possible facilities for the conservation of books and sound recordings. Public tours of the Centre have been hugely popular.  
- Sacred in 2007 provided our best ever exhibition visitor numbers – more than 200,000 for the main St Pancras exhibition and 6,600 for the regional touring exhibition.  
- Our winter exhibition in 2007/08, Breaking the Rules, attracted over 123,000 visitors - 50% above target – and attracted a younger audience to the Library with 53% aged 16 – 44,  
- 19% of visitors to Front Page, featuring 100 years of historic newspapers, and opened by HM the Queen in May 2006 were aged between 16 and 24.  
- Individual visitors to our website have increased from 5.7 million in 2005/06 to 9.7 million in 2007/08. |
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| Growing Knowledge | 2011 | We launched our 2020 vision in September 2010 at a time of severe financial challenge which is likely to persist in the medium term. The consequences of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review are that we will need to do more with less and we must be clear about our priorities, our responsibilities and our constraints. Our ambitious vision for 2020 requires our resources to be allocated in a smart way – effectively and efficiently. In this context we present our Strategy 2011–2015 which sets out how we intend incrementally to move towards delivering our vision over the next four years. Our strategy is to focus on five clear priorities. We will focus on enabling access to everyone who wants to do research and on enriching the cultural life of the nation. These opportunities arise at a time when the Library will have to respond to financial reductions:  
- a 15% reduction in resource Grant in Aid by 2014/15  
- a halving of our baseline capital budget over the next four years, 2011/12 to 2014/15  
We are therefore entering into a financial environment which will be fundamentally different from the one we have known. We will have to deliver spending reductions at an unprecedented level and, by 2014, our Grant in Aid will be at the lowest level, in real terms, since the Library’s inception in 1973. | To address the severe funding shortfall, we will accelerate initiatives to make cost reductions and pursue opportunities available to us to diversify income streams. We will maximise our ability to deliver in the more challenging financial environment we face by:  
- Moving towards a smaller, highly skilled, permanent core workforce, facilitated by a range of service delivery models.  
- Maintaining a culture of continuous improvement, and identifying opportunities for efficiencies, increased effectiveness and invest-to-save initiatives.  
We will develop and grow revenue streams and contribution by:  
- Reviewing existing revenue-generating services and seeking opportunities to develop new services.  
- Developing and rolling out our brand licensing proposition.  
- Improving our e-commerce offering and leveraging customer relationship management capability to drive up-sell and cross-sell.  
We will develop and grow philanthropic giving by:  
- Refreshing the ‘Campaign for the British Library’.  
- Continuing to develop and build our relations with current and potential future donors and, specifically, developing ongoing partnerships with a small number of corporates. |
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| Living Knowledge  | 2015 | Growing Knowledge predicted correctly that by 2014 the British Library’s Grant in Aid would be at its lowest level in real terms since the Library’s inception. We now have a clear understanding of the likely climate for public funding over the next strategy period, and that further hard decisions about investment priorities lie ahead. We do not underestimate the scale of this challenge; but we face it, along with the other challenges identified above, with confidence in the case we can make to the public, Government, philanthropic donors and potential commercial partners for the value we build for the UK and the importance of the six purposes that guide us. | Completed delivery of a succession of major projects:  
- the long-awaited move to Legal Deposit collecting of born-digital UK content, including the web  
- the epic programme to save the national newspaper collection and make it accessible in new ways  
- the partnership with the Qatar Foundation to launch a digital portal of primary sources on Gulf history and Arabic science.  
Other achievements:  
- 25 million images have been released by the British Library under open licence terms since 2012. Open licences allow copyright expired material to be reused for any purpose.  
- Since its creation in 2006 the Business & IP Centre has helped to create an average of 550 businesses and 1,200 jobs per year for the London economy and generated £8.80 per £1 of public money invested.  
- In the last three years our reach to school students has grown by 70% to 32,826 for onsite visits and doubled to 3 million for online visits. |

Figure 31 - British Library strategies 1985-2015 - Finance and KPIs