

**Developing an Archaeological Resource Centre
Guidance for Sustainable Storage and Access to Museum
Collections**

Archaeological Archives Forum

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document has two principal aims. The first is to define what an Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) is and the second is to set out recommended procedures that should be followed in developing such a thing, from preparatory work, through planning to execution.

It is intended that these guidelines will be used to support any project designed to create an ARC. Reference to this document should satisfy stakeholders that the project will proceed within a nationally accepted framework.

It is possible to set out a programme for delivery, but identifying areas of funding is less straightforward. Funding has been looked into as part of this project but funding agencies rarely commit themselves to theoretical exercises, and consequently the section on funding is rather brief.

1.2 Background

In March 2006 Valerie Wilson, on behalf of English Heritage, completed her 'Survey of current state of play for development of Resource Centres in England'. This concluded that '...very little is being done in the way of developing regional resource centres' and that '...there seems to be little enthusiasm for a scheme which has too many pitfalls' (Wilson).

Wilson's survey was based on a rapid appraisal of the situation in England, intended to identify organisations with plans to develop dedicated resource centres for their archaeological archives. The survey was conducted by telephone and backed up by a questionnaire, and was mainly directed at local authority archaeologists (ALGAO members), MLA regional councils and selected museums.

One recommendation of the survey was to 'Assess the possibility of producing national standards for resource centres at a county or unitary authority level, including a clear definition of what constitutes a resource centre and guidelines for setting them up'.

These Guidelines are the response to that document.

1.3 Developing the Guidance

Valerie Wilson's survey lists organisations that have developed or are planning to develop an archaeological resource centre. Visits to those places, and meetings with key personnel, provided the background to the development process, and gave further insight into particular issues and pitfalls. Several organisations subsequently sent various documents and supporting information. This has been backed up by reviews of the procedures required by various funding agencies and collated into the sections presented here.

2 DEFINING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE

2.1 DEFINITION

There are two basic principles that underpin the definition of an ARC. One is that the resource is located in one place, the other is that it exists to maximise the use of that resource.

An Archaeological Resource Centre is defined as:

An accredited centre dedicated to the collection and curation of archaeological archive material from within a defined area, that is staffed and managed to provide the best possible access to the archaeological resource for the purposes of enquiry, exhibition, learning, research and general interest.

2.2 ACCREDITATION

In order for an ARC to comply with existing standards of archaeological archive curation, it should receive accreditation from the Museums Libraries and Archives Partnership (MLA). Details of the Accreditation scheme can be found at http://www.mla.gov.uk/programmes/accreditation/accreditation_about.

The MLA's Accreditation Standard can be found at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/accreditation_standard_pdf_5640.pdf.

This states that 'Collections stores, offices and other facilities are covered by the eligibility of the related museum site/s. Consideration will be given to awarding separate Accredited status to those stores, etc. which incorporate services and facilities for visitors.'

This emphasises the necessity of making the collection housed in an ARC accessible to visitors.

2.3 DESCRIPTION

In her survey Wilson noted that '...quite different perceptions emerged about what constitutes a resource centre, what area a resource centre should cover...' (Wilson), and it is very difficult to make a generic definition of an archaeological resource centre. There are perhaps two nationally recognised models, at York and London, but each of them may be considered the products of local circumstances that may be difficult to replicate elsewhere. These projects are described in Appendix 2, while Appendix 3 showcases three other case studies from different parts of England, with the aim of providing examples of how ARCs can, or cannot, come about in different ways, and even serve differing requirements.

For most organisations, an ARC will represent a solution to the problem of housing and curating archaeological collections. Nearly every museum store in the country has insufficient capacity, and English Heritage, among others, consider an ARC to be the best

means of improving storage for, and providing access to, the extensive archaeological resource represented by project archives.

Various separate elements might also be included, such as Historic Environment Records, Historic Buildings Records and non-archaeological museum collections. The inclusion of these may strengthen the case for developing and funding a Resource Centre.

Storage and access remain the two key elements. An ARC must be developed to a standard that will achieve MLA accreditation as an archaeological repository. It must also provide access to anyone wishing to visit the collections, including specialists, researchers and members of the public. This latter element is usually a fundamental requirement for most public funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

2.4 WHAT AN ARC CONTAINS

Previous discussions of the archaeological archive storage problem have tended towards the establishment of regional resource centres, which bring together several hitherto separate collections that were, or will remain, under the care of separate regional administrative bodies. This has not yet been attempted anywhere in the country and Wilson's survey includes the observation that there is a general movement away from regional centres towards local solutions that preserve existing collecting areas and staff structures. There is also now the feeling that funding agencies have less money to offer to large scale schemes.

The archaeological collections of Kent may be distributed among several districts, but the plan to unify them in a single resource centre is still a solution for Kent alone, and does not encompass any areas beyond that county. In Hereford, the new resource centre includes different types of collection, including archaeology, fine art, geology etc. that have always been curated by the County Council. The Great North Museum project will make more accessible the various museum collections it represents (see Appendix 2).

The key aspect to this is therefore that the collection is well-defined and properly managed to reflect the agreed collecting criteria.

There remains, however, the sticky problem of defining an archaeological collection. The most current description of the archaeological archive is of considerable help here:

An archaeological archive consists of all material identified as suitable for curation, and may be divided into two main elements:

The documentary archive comprises all records made during an archaeological project, including those in hard copy and digital form. This includes written records, drawings and photographs (including negatives, prints, transparencies and x-radiographs), reports, publication drafts, published work, and publication drawings and photographs. Digital material comprises all born-digital material, including text, data, drawings, 3D models, photographs and video, as well as files generated from digitised material, such as data entered from paper pro-forma and scanned images or text.

The material archive comprises all objects (artefacts, building materials or environmental remains) and associated samples (of contextual materials or objects).

(Brown 2007, 4)

This should be sufficient to cover the contents of most archaeological collections, although it may be preferable here to substitute the word 'collection' for 'archive'. The separation of documentary and material elements reflects many existing collections, for instance where antiquarian finds are not accompanied by contemporary documentation.

For that description to become fully inclusive, however, it is necessary to add that a deposited archaeological collection must be documented to required museum standards and subject to systems of location management and environmental control.

3 CREATING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE

This section describes the process of creating an ARC, from pre-project work through to moving in. Section Four outlines continuing issues of running the facility once it is in existence, but these must of course be kept in mind throughout earlier stages. There are six stages of creation, each with various phases or tasks that may run concurrently or consecutively.

Given the likely variety in the size and scope of the ARCs that may be using these guidelines, it is difficult to cover every eventuality. The consistent element is the management of archaeological archive material, and it should be recognised that although the basic principles and methods set out in this document may be applied to the creation of general museum collections centres, the aim is to address issues that will resolve archaeological storage and access problems. The following is a basic guide to the actions most likely to be required, either as part of the fund-raising process, or in order to maintain accepted standards of collections care and access.

3.1 APPOINTING A PROJECT MANAGER

A Project Management Board should have been formed, or at least identified, in the project preparation phase, and will represent each of the interested parties, but this will not necessarily include personnel with the expertise to inform the close control of specific tasks or areas of development. It will therefore be necessary to appoint a project manager to liaise between the Management Board and various working parties or individuals.

In the earliest phases, however, a project manager will be needed to oversee the completion of the tasks required in the preparation phase.

3.2 PHASE 1: PREPARATION

Most of the tasks required in the preparation phase are developmental studies aimed at providing the information necessary for attracting funding and the support of decision-makers. It is highly likely that people with little or no archaeological understanding will have to be persuaded of the merits of developing an ARC and most of those studies will

be used for that purpose. They will also help to define the project and provide a plan for those most immediately involved.

It is assumed here that most organisations that are likely to undertake the development of an ARC will already have a strategic plan and an education/learning policy. These are likely to be required by funding agencies for inclusion in grant applications.

Other preparative tasks will establish the aims of the project, the nature of the collection to be incorporated into the ARC, the likely audience and the workability of the entire scheme.

Task 1 SWOT analysis

This will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that already exist in relation to the project.

The aim is to

- clarify the roles of all parties involved
- identify a project management structure
- build on existing strengths within all parties involved
- make the most of existing assets
- develop a strategy to minimise risks and address weaknesses
- offer more than one possible solution to the perceived problems
- inform plans for long-term resourcing and management.

This exercise may feed directly into funding strategies by identifying the need for, and potential identity of

- advocates for the project
- political supporters
- project stakeholders
- project partners
- heritage champions.

Task 2 Scoping study

This should set out the rationale, aims and extent of the project.

Rationale

- describe existing storage provision, with a forecast for future expansion needs
- describe existing provision for access
- describe existing levels of use of the collection for outreach, learning, research
- explain how an ARC will improve collections care, access and use
- link the ARC to local and national community priorities.

Aims

- describe what will be achieved, including premises, facilities, staff structure and collections management
- describe what is required for MLA Accreditation of the ARC, and how this is reflected in the Aims.

Extent

- explain which collections are to be included in the scheme
- introduce other intended partners
- outline the intended audience, both the geographical area and the general demography
- refer to research agendas for the study of the historic environment served by the ARC, and how it will contribute to them.

Task 3 Feasibility study

A feasibility study will build on the scoping study to consider possible options for the development of an ARC, including:

- setting out the vision, concept and context for developing an ARC
- summarising the existing situation
- identifying possible locations, sites and/or specific buildings
- laying out an initial design for the layout of the ARC
- identifying project partners
- identifying costs and funding sources
- determining the most effective management structure
- the benefits for the collections, the partners and the community.

Task 4 Business plan

Compile a business plan that sets out:

- the estimated cost of development
- the estimated costs of running the ARC, including maintenance utilities, IT provision etc
- staffing requirements, including numbers and structure
- staff recruitment and management, including relocation, and continuing professional development
- a realistic evaluation of probable and likely income streams
- the estimated income that the project will generate year by year for at least the next five years
- a marketing strategy for establishing and maintaining a public profile for the ARC
- the consequences of failing to meet targets.

Task 5 Audience consultation

Conduct audience research, through surveys and focus groups to establish:

- what sectors of the potential audience are most likely to access the ARC
- why people are likely to visit the ARC
- what visitors to the ARC would prefer to see and/or experience
- what services and/or activities that could be offered for which visitors would pay
- the existence of supporting groups (Friends, archaeology societies) or the possibility of forming one.

Task 6

Audience development plan

An audience development plan should set out:

- methods for attracting a core audience
- methods for attracting visitors from outside the core audience
- methods for maintaining, then increasing, visitor figures.

Task 7

Collections development plan

It is important to establish the exact extent and nature of the collection that will be housed in the ARC. Conduct a survey that will quantify the size of the collection:

- overall in cubic metres
- the numbers of boxes of different sizes
- the amount of material that requires storage in particular environmental conditions
- the quantity of photographs, drawings etc.
- the quantity of files of different types in the digital archive
- the size of the space that the collection currently occupies

This should be incorporated into, and inform a Collections Development Plan that will:

- establish the collection area, and collecting criteria and priorities
- establish ownership of the collection
- review current local standards for the future deposition of archaeological archives, and recommend development as appropriate
- set out how to make box sizes and labelling consistent
- set out how to rationalise and/or reduce the collection, so that what is moved into the ARC comprises only those things that should be permanently retained
- set out how to update documentation, including introducing a single system for identifying individual projects, and a consistent terminology for materials and objects.
- estimate the space needed for expansion over at least the next twenty years.

Task 8

Access policy and plan

An access policy specific to the ARC should outline:

- what is meant by access
- how access fits into the organisation's strategic plan
- the principles informing the accessibility of the ARC
- how the ARC will be made accessible to all visitors specifically regarding:
 - services and facilities
 - learning and outreach programs and events
 - consultation with users, non-users, staff and other interested parties
 - in-house training
 - monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

An access plan will set out how to achieve the aims of your access policy. It should cover all aspects of access including cultural, financial, intellectual, organisational, physical, sensory and social.

3.3 PHASE 2: FUNDING

It is highly likely that external funding will be required throughout the project, from preparation onwards. Small grants can be utilised in preparation and perhaps design, but the development stage will require substantial sums that are only available from a few sources.

The preparation phase will have identified potential partners and existing support groups and produced plans for collections and audience development and business management. These should be utilised to bring in political support and advocacy at the highest level possible. Funding will be easier to achieve with political support, archaeological or commercial partners, project stakeholders and heritage champions. All of these should have been identified and fostered in the preparation phase.

At the time of writing it is extremely difficult to identify probable sources of funding. The Heritage Lottery Fund has assisted projects at London, Hereford, and Tyne and Wear (see Appendices 2 and 3) but HLF representatives state that there is no formal policy in this area and they will consider applications individually. The general consensus is that fewer large projects, especially those involving new builds, are attracting HLF funding.

Completion of the preparation stage will provide the information necessary to attract funding, and advice on where to apply should be available from MLA regional groups.

A realistic business plan is essential for attracting funding.

3.4 PHASE 3: DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making procedures vary between organisations such as Local Authorities and Trusts, and this document cannot cover every different possibility. It is generally the case, however, that high level decision-makers will not be as knowledgeable about the project as those presenting it to them. The supporting documentation gathered in the preparation stage is of primary importance here. It will also be important to make clear any requirement for external funding, together with an exact indication of the amount of money required from the decision-making body.

Summary documents that condense all the information in the supporting material are useful in helping decision-makers quickly to grasp the nature and merits of the project.

It would be unusual for an ARC to be developed in a building in which the collection is already housed. It is assumed here, therefore, that it will be necessary to identify and acquire a new site. The Feasibility Study should have identified a range of site options that will be set before the decision-makers, probably with a particular recommendation.

The key decisions at this time are:

- where the ARC will be developed
- how much money will be put into the project
- what the management structure of the project will be.

3.5 PHASE 4: DESIGN

Once the site has been acquired and funding has been found, the project can enter the detailed design stage. It is unlikely that all the appropriate expertise can be found within the managing organisation, and external consultants will be required.

Consultants may be required for the following design elements:

- the building – external arrangements, access, internal spaces, power, heating, lighting, plumbing, flooring
- interior arrangements, furniture, décor, display furniture
- storage furniture – shelving and/or racking, cabinets
- communications and IT infrastructure
- digital management and website creation and maintenance
- environmental control systems
- security
- health and safety.

Draw up specifications and design briefs for all the above and send them out for tender. Assistance with this should be available from the MLA and Museum Development Officers. Project management will then decide which consultants to commission.

Specifications and briefs should be:

- informed by the requirements of MLA accreditation
- sufficiently detailed to ensure consultants supply exactly what is required
- viewed for comment by more than one person
- set up for management by people who may not have specific expertise in that area. To this end specify every detail, especially the reasons for wanting particular things – such as racking made of a metal that can sustain the required weight
- referenced to appropriate standards
- informed by current health and safety requirements.

There are many examples of various design briefs that have been created for specific projects, but no generic templates that can be incorporated into this document. This is largely because local circumstances will dictate what the requirements of a design brief should be. The preparatory documentation, business, access and collection plans, should have established how the ARC is intended to function, and it is that overall strategy that will inform the composition of design briefs.

It is important that the designers follow the briefs they have been given, and they should be closely managed throughout

3.6 PHASE 5: DEVELOPMENT

The same principle applies to the management of the development phase. On-site contractors may not necessarily follow their instructions as precisely as they should, and will require close management, from in-house personnel and the designers themselves. This latter requirement should be included into the design contracts.

If they are not also contracting organisations themselves, design consultants should have produced briefs to be sent out to tender from contractors. These will go through the same process outlined above, managed by the Project Board and Project Manager. The final decision on whom to appoint rests with those both those entities.

Briefs and final contracts should build in contingencies against unforeseen obstacles to development, and penalty clauses as protection of the project against avoidable delays.

It should be recognised that the Project Manager is likely to have to devote 100% of their working hours to the development phase, and it is not conducive to success to expect them to carry out other tasks or responsibilities within the organisation during this period. At the very least, a member of the project team should be on-site throughout.

The development phase is the point where the project can be more actively publicised. Press releases, public lectures and consultation could all be utilised to raise the profile and engender audience expectation. This will help with marketing once the project has been completed.

3.7 PHASE 6: COMPLETION

Completion of the project will be in three phases: occupation of the ARC, solving immediate problems and opening it as a public facility.

Occupation

Prior to occupation it is important to create a plan to determine:

- the timetable for moving into the ARC
- the order in which separate parts of the collection should be installed
- the procedure for moving in personnel
- a strategy for solving problems that arise once the facility is occupied.

It is preferable to begin moving in once all work on site has been completed, but for various reasons this may not always be possible. The facility at Hereford (see Appendix 3) was developed over several phases, each separately funded, and the collections had to be moved in before work extending the building had been commenced. This has to be managed (as it was at Hereford) to ensure the collections remain secure and risks are managed and minimised.

Opening

The initial business plan should have included a marketing strategy, and this might have been implemented during the development stage. Once the ARC has been occupied,

marketing should be intensified, in line with previously agreed strategies, to stimulate initial interest. The opening is an opportunity to launch the project with maximum publicity.

4 MAINTAINING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE

Sustainability is the key to maintaining an ARC. The example of the ARC/DIG project at York is that hard work and continuous development is required to ensure that visitor levels are kept constant or improved. After two years, a review and implementation plan for the London LAARC set out a five-year strategy for development and improvement.

One strength is that the validity of the collection is likely to increase, as more archaeological project archives are deposited. It is therefore the area of access that is most subject to development. New audiences need to be attracted to the ARC, and existing ones built up. It is therefore important regularly to revise the business and audience development plans and the marketing strategy.

The function of an ARC is the protection of the archaeological resource represented by archaeological collections, and the provision of access to that resource. Access requirements will change, so too the nature of the archives deposited, and it is important that the management of the ARC continues to function as originally intended.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Background

Swain, H, 1996 'Here Comes a National Museums Crisis' British Archaeology no 12, March 1996 <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/BA/ba12/ba12comm.html>

Wilson, V, 2006 'Survey of current state of play for development of Resource Centres in England' English Heritage, unpublished

Relevant Organisations and Government Initiatives

ACF	http://www.acf.org.uk/
Arts and Business	http://www.aandb.org.uk/
HELM	http://www.helm.org.uk/
Inspiring Learning for All	http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/
Kids in Museums	http://www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk/
Museums Association	http://www.museumsassociation.org/
Museums Libraries and Archives	http://www.mla.gov.uk/home

Funding Advice

Fundraising Directory	http://www.fundraising.co.uk/
Heritage Link	http://www.heritagelink.org.uk/fundingdirectory/main/fundinghome.php
Heritage Lottery Fund guidance notes	http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/PublicationsAndInfo/AccessingPublications/GuidanceNotes.htm
HLF application advice	http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/PublicationsAndInfo/AccessingPublications/Helping+your+application.htm
HLF Useful Links	http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/PublicationsAndInfo/UsefulLinks/

Collections Management Information

Brown 2007, 'Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation', AAF

MLA Accreditation
http://www.mla.gov.uk/programmes/accreditation/accreditation_about

http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/accreditation_standard_pdf_5640.pdf.

Museums Association Disposal Toolkit
http://www.museumsassociation.org/asset_arena/text/it/disposal_toolkit.pdf

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Duncan H. Brown
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APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY LIST OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

Preparation

Scoping study
Feasibility study
SWOT analysis
Business plan
Audience development plan
Collections development Plan
Access policy

Management

Management structure plan

Design

Design briefs for
Building works, including structure, flooring, access
Services – power, lighting, heating, plumbing
Furnishings and décor
Storage
Communications and IT
Environmental control systems
Fire safety
Security

Development

Contracts for all site contractors

Completion

Occupation plan
Marketing strategy

YORK

The ARC in York opened in 1990, and was run by the York Archaeological Trust as an interactive educational facility where visitors could learn more about archaeological techniques, and talk to specialists as they worked. It provided some storage for part of the Trust's archaeological collection, particularly those finds being worked on in the ARC, but this was never its intended function. Here, the word 'Resource' very much emphasised the relationship between the Trust and the public. By 2001 the storage had been removed and a grant from the Millennium Commission led to the ARC being developed into DIG. This new facility is aimed more specifically at a younger age group or families, and offers a range of interactive learning experiences.

The ARC, now DIG, at York does not fit easily with the needs of most local authorities seeking storage and accessibility solutions. Those projects were founded on the success of the Jorvik Viking Centre, which virtually no other place in the country would be able to emulate. DIG also helps to fulfil the charitable functions of the Trust, making learning of primary importance. The transition from ARC to DIG was led by the need for sustainability, and was intended to increase visitor figures and maintain the Trust's profile. It is essentially an interactive museum rather than a store.

LONDON

The LAARC (London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre) opened in 2002. This more readily fits the model of an ARC that most organisations would wish to emulate. It holds archives from past archaeological projects carried out in Greater London, and has become the repository for all present and future archaeological archives. The stores meet standards for security and environmental conditions, and considerable effort is put into making the collection accessible. Housed at Mortimer Wheeler House, in Hackney, the LAARC shares space with the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLAS) and there are clearly mutual benefits in that arrangement, especially regarding archive delivery and management, but also in the proximity of experienced practitioners and expertise (although MOLAS is not the only archaeological contracting organisation operating in London). The strengths of this relationship are shown in the way that staff at the LAARC develop the outreach programmes, while MOLAS conducts the research that feeds into the public programme. The successful refitting of major archaeological galleries at the Museum of London perhaps represent the success of the project, for they have brought together a wide range of exhibits, knowledge and interpretations.

Like York, London is quite different to most other places in the country, especially in the way it can attract funding, and it is not easy to see many other unitary authorities finding themselves able to establish a facility on the same scale. The actual cost of the project, nearly two and a half million pounds, may be seen to be relatively low, but over half of that came from HLF and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Those sorts of sums are rarely available now for archaeological archive storage projects.

APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDIES OF DEVELOPING PROJECTS

HEREFORD

The Museum Resource and Learning Centre in Hereford has brought together museum collections for Herefordshire, including archaeology, decorative arts, geology, local and natural history. The project has been carried out over five stages. Phase One was the acquisition of an existing building in 2000 and fitting out for storage. Phase Two saw the installation of the museum collections in 2003. Thereafter the building was extended to provide a visitor centre, with workspace for visitors and volunteers, rooms for school parties and other learning groups, and staff offices. This phase will be completed in 2008.

This is not purely an archaeological resource centre. The bringing together of several types of collections and their curators offers a varied learning experience while providing a local solution to museum storage problems. Although the integrity of the stores is a major concern, the emphasis is very much on access and learning. Funding has come mainly from the HLF, with the first bid submitted before 2000, with support from the County Council.

KENT

The archaeological collections of Kent are scattered over twelve districts and one other unitary authority. At present they comprise over 1,000 cubic metres of material. None of the existing repositories have staff with archaeological expertise. Kent County Council, represented by the County Archaeologist and the County Museums Manager, are developing plans to bring the collection together in a single resource centre. Ownership of the collection would continue to reside with individual authorities, and each would therefore contribute to the management of the material on their behalf. An existing building has been identified as a possible site. The lack of existing staff simplifies things, as there are no issues around relocation of personnel. New staff would make the collection accessible as a learning resource, and also work with stakeholders in providing information and material for local exhibitions. Exhibition space may also be built into the resource centre.

If this plan is realised there will have to be a period of rationalisation of the collection, including introducing consistent box sizes and instigating a retrospective retention/dispersal programme. This should lead to the introduction of universal standards for archaeological archive delivery and curation across the whole county. There is no plan to move anything other than archaeological material into this facility.

TYNE AND WEAR MUSEUMS

The Great North Museum (GNM) project is a joint scheme between Tyne & Wear Museums (TWM) and The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne. The £26 million project includes three main elements: the merger of Newcastle University's museums (the Hancock Museum, the Shefton Museum and the Museum of Antiquities); the redevelopment of the Hancock Museum building and site; the provision of accessible

storage to the collections in the basement of TWM's Discovery Museum. The project is currently underway and both facilities will be open in early 2009.

The GNM project includes the redisplay and re-storage of the collections in the ownership of The Society of Antiquities of Newcastle and the Natural History Society of Northumbria. The GNM at the Hancock Museum will focus on the redisplay and reinterpretation of the Societies' archaeology, ethnography and natural history collections. The accessible stores in the basement of Discovery Museum will house the remaining (historic) archaeological archive, ethnography and natural history collections. Both sites will provide research and learning access to the Societies' collections.

The two GNM facilities will continue to house some of the region's historic archaeological collections while collections arising from contract archaeology are deposited at two other TWM sites, Arbeia Roman Fort Museum (South Tyneside) or its counterpart at Segedunum (North Tyneside).

The GNM project is an example of how complicated collections management and access can become when partners work together to manage their differing priorities while resources are being reduced. At present, access to archaeological collections *per se* is not a priority. The collection is well served by experience and expertise and in the future new storage will have to be considered for material deposited by contracting organisations. A centralised store may benefit researchers and other visitors, but from 2009 the GNM will provide easy access to the collections for specific learning & research activities.