

**Scottish Textile Heritage Online final report**  
**Appendix I: meeting to discuss proposed textile collections network**

**City Art Centre, Edinburgh**  
**21 September 2005**

<b>Facilitator:</b>	Rachel Hunter	Museum Consultant
<b>Present:</b>	Lesley Botten	Fife Council
	Elinor Clark	South Ayrshire Council
	Linda Fairlie	East Ayrshire Council
	Gillian Findlay	Scottish Museums Council
	Liza Giffen	Business Archives Council of Scotland
	Matthew Jarron	University of Dundee
	Ann Jones	Heriot-Watt University
	Jenny Lister	Victoria and Albert Museum
	Pauline Low	South Lanarkshire Council
	Bruce Morgan	East Ayrshire Council
	Anita Quaye	National Museums of Scotland
	Janet Rae	Quilters' Guild of the British Isles
	Alison Rosie	National Register of Archives for Scotland
	Shona Sinclair	Scottish Borders Council
	Yvonne Tough	West Dunbartonshire Council
	Fergus Waters	Scottish Mining Museum
<b>Notes:</b>	Helen Raine	Scottish Museums Council
<b>Apologies:</b>	Helen Armitage	Fife Folk Museum
	Dan Coughlan	Paisley Museum and Art Galleries
	Margaret Harrison	
	Rachel Hosker	Glasgow University Archive Services
	Catherine Nicholson	Glasgow School of Art
	Janette Park	Orkney Islands Council
	Valerie Reilly	Paisley Museum and Art Galleries
	Abigail Walker	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

## **1. Welcome and introduction**

Rachel welcomed the group and gave a brief recap of the outcomes of the textile collection forum held in May. The main question was how to take the project forward – whether to freeze it at the point reached so far, or to develop it within existing resources.

A number of issues had been raised at the forum, including the lack of contemporary collecting and a need to develop guidelines for good practice in acquisitions. The possibility of setting up a group to look at these issues had been raised.

Rachel emphasised that any commitment coming out of today's meeting would be based on the understanding that it would have to be within existing resources.

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**2. What can we learn from the experiences of other networks? The Scottish Coal Mining Collections survey (Fergus Waters, Scottish Mining Museum)**

Fergus explained that as there are no contemporary collecting issues around mining (there are no more objects to be collected), this was a mapping project to find out what collections exist and where they are. One advantage was that they had a natural hub in the Scottish Mining Museum (unlike for textiles where there is not one main collection).

The group first of all decided what they wanted to achieve (albeit a vague goal) and then took simple steps towards achieving it. Not all of the objects were documented so the first step was just to identify them – their location, contact names, access, summary content, scope/level/numbers, overall condition, who was running the collection and what specialist knowledge there was. The group opted not to go down route of social history.

Another advantage the group had was the fact that the Mining Museum is closely connected with industry and they therefore managed to get funding based on their good contacts.

The group produced a basic report: *Coal Collections Survey Phase I Report 0405*. For the next phase they are looking at collection level descriptions and are currently talking about funding.

Fergus concluded that the initial project worked well because it was simple, focused and had simple funding with no hooks. They tried to do it within the capacity of the museum and keep the expertise there. The total budget for the first phase was £7000.

**3. Towards a subject specialist network: Textiles and Fashion (Jenny Lister, Curator Fashion 1800-1914, the Victoria & Albert Museum)**

The V&A is in the early stages of setting up a network for costume and textiles (building on the strong DATS network.) They have got two levels of funding: up to £4000 for the exploratory stage and up to £30,000 for implementation. A meeting held earlier this year in London was oversubscribed and showed that there was a lot of interest in such a network.

Seven “themes” were discussed at the meeting:

- Wide definition of fashion
- Addressing skills and expertise
- Website possibilities
- Mapping collections
- Regional networks
- Travelling exhibitions
- Documentation

The two major issues that came out of the meeting were training; and using the internet in a more proactive way – to help both audiences and ourselves.

*(For more detail see document produced by Jenny circulated at this meeting.)*

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Following the meeting they circulated a questionnaire to gauge interest in setting up a website, and about twenty people responded who were willing to contribute. They have looked at the Heriot-Watt website and also the “Pockets” project set up in Winchester (which is a much more focused project).

It is hoped that a potential outcome of this could be small training days or masterclasses – focussed study days led by experts.

**4. Networking: the SMC’s perspective (Gill Findlay, Collections Development Officer, Scottish Museums Council)**

There are already some excellent models of subject specialist networks in the rural museums network, and the social history curators’ network. They present enormous potential to progress collections development and also strategic aims. Currently the will is there but there is no specific funding – although SMC’s small grants scheme could be utilised.

MLA have networks UK-wide, but these may not always be the most effective or appropriate route for Scottish museums.

SMC wants to find out the aspirations of the group – is it to be something specifically Scottish? There are implications for staff and resources getting involved. What support could SMC or NMS give?

**5. Do we want to set up a steering group to develop a cross-sectoral textile collections network?**

The group agreed that they did want to set up a steering group.

**6. Defining the remit of a steering group**

The group referred to the notes from the meeting held in Glasgow in May, where the following points were proposed:

- *Look at the sustainability of the outcomes of STHOL*
- *Devise a strategy for contemporary collecting* (This is currently very ad hoc – we need to make sure it is happening in the right place, establish what should be collected and make sure there is no duplication.)
- *Generate good practice and rationalisation guidelines*
- *Create a database of expertise and resources* (Leading to an exchange of expertise.)
- *Examine existing /emerging networks and identify ways of collaborating with these (possibly as an alternative to setting up a new network)*
- *Consider membership categories and criteria*

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Regarding a definition of textiles, Ann Jones confirmed that the original project took it in its broadest sense (i.e. including textiles machinery, archives etc) as they felt this best reflected reality.

After some discussion of the above points, and whether they were focussed enough, it was decided that rather than establishing a remit at this point it should be up to the steering group to define it.

**7. Representation on the steering group**

The following people volunteered to form the steering group:

Gill Findlay, Scottish Museums Council  
Liza Giffen, Business Archives Council of Scotland  
Matthew Jarron, University of Dundee  
Jenny Lister, Victoria and Albert Museum  
Pauline Low, South Lanarkshire Council  
Alison Rosie, National Register of Archives for Scotland  
Yvonne Tough, West Dunbartonshire Council (**Convenor**)

The following people could not attend this meeting but had registered interest in being part of the steering group:

Helen Taylor, Heriot-Watt University  
Lesley Richmond or Rachel Hosker, Glasgow University Archive Services  
Joan Lyall, City of Edinburgh Council  
Val Reilly or Dan Coughlan, Paisley Museum and Art Galleries  
Fiona Anderson, National Museums of Scotland

Other people present expressed an interest but were concerned about the commitment required.

**8. Lifespan of the steering group**

It was agreed to commit to two or three meetings at this stage and then review the situation after about a year. At that point, if the group is to be sustained, membership and representation can be discussed.

**9. Date of first meeting**

The first meeting of the steering group will take place on Monday 28 November 2005 at 2pm, at the offices of the Scottish Museums Council in Edinburgh.

The six points taken from the last meeting (see item 6) will be used as a basis for the agenda and the meeting will be used to agree the terms of reference.