



**Final Report
December 2006**

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1. Executive Summary: progress in achieving aims and objectives

Scottish Textile Heritage Online was one of 13 projects supported by the Scottish Executive's Strategic Change Fund, administered by the Scottish Museums Council. The overall aim of the Fund was to promote strategic change through funding projects that delivered or tested sustainable outcomes.

STHOL received £128,670 from May 2003 from the Strategic Change Fund and was an innovative pilot project mapping Scotland's textile heritage.

The Project Partners:

Heriot Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow University Archive Services, Paisley Museum and Art Galleries, Scottish Borders Council Museum and Gallery Service and the University of Dundee Archive, Records Management and Museum Services.

Drawing on existing models of cross-sectoral partnerships, this innovative pilot project for the first time provides a one-stop guide to Scottish textile collections through the website <http://www.scottishtextileheritage.org.uk/>

The website contains a searchable database of approximately 3000 descriptions of textile related museum and archive collections and objects, along with a gallery of some 400 images. An online resources section contains essays on a wide range of textile related subjects, and maps show the distribution of the textile collections across Scotland.

1.2 Project aims

- Support sustainable development by bringing together the complementary expertise of curators, archivists, conservators and researchers in a collaborative network to develop the framework of a collecting policy for a distributed national textile collection within Scotland's museums and archives.
- Evaluate methodologies for appraisal and rationalisation of collections and cross-sectoral documentation.
- Provide a fully evaluated and documented exemplar for further development and application to other collecting areas.

1.3 Outcomes

Scottish Textile Heritage Online successfully delivered its aims of achieving an overview of textile collections in Scotland's museums and archives and promoting access to these collections through the website and an online database of collections. It has laid the foundations of a sustainable textile collections network, bringing together museum and archive professionals who previously had limited contact with one another. It has demonstrated the value and the need for cross-sectoral collaboration between museum and archive staff in managing hybrid collections that undercut traditional object/archive classifications. The project provides a well documented exemplar and evaluation model for cross-sectoral documentation of collections. It breaks new ground by offering a valuable case study of collection level description for museums.

The project has proved to be an effective demonstration of the value, to users and collections managers, of a national database of textile related collections but has

revealed the lack of opportunities for continuation funding that would extend, consolidate and update the mapping of collections. A key issue identified in the course of the project is the lack of sources of grant aid to continue to update the database of collections. For example, the eligibility criteria of the Heritage Lottery Fund did not support the continuation of an existing project. A sustainable source of funding is critical to maintain the comprehensive and detailed overview of collections needed to identify strengths weaknesses and gaps in collections across Scotland and inform a strategic collecting policy. Experience of the project also illustrated the challenges for the host and partners of completing the final stages after the funding for the project team came to an end.

Scottish Textile Heritage Online has fulfilled an important strategic function by articulating key issues in developing a distributed national textile collection and the practical considerations and challenges this presents. Due to the ambitious scope of the project and its limited timescale, the detailed and delicate issues of how museums and archives can coordinate collecting and rationalisation remain to be taken forward. A Scottish Textile Network Steering Group has been formed to consider how this can be achieved. The Steering Group is considering options for archiving the project website. It is also investigating possible mechanisms for partners and other museums and archives to update their collection information, and explore avenues of additional funding to add data from additional partners.

It is hoped that the challenges explored through **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** can be addressed by continued cross-sectoral collaboration through a Scottish Textile Network and informally through the new relationships made and existing contacts strengthened in the course of this exciting project.

Aims	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the location, extent, strengths and weaknesses of Scottish textile collections through a pilot survey, primarily focusing on museums and archives within Scotland but including examples of Scottish textile collections in other UK institutions. 	<p>Achieved. Identified need for focus on contemporary collecting</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the scope for developing a national textiles collecting policy, building cross-sectoral partnerships/collaboration and sharing professional expertise in the management of textile collections. This draws on the model of highly successful collaborative projects to increase access to a “Distributed National Collection” of archive and library resources developed under the higher education funded Research Support Libraries Programme. The project will go further by exploring 	<p>Policy: explored issues but limited progress. Consensus that contemporary collecting represented safer ground for collaboration than established collecting interests?</p> <p>Website and database demonstrate value of “Distributed National Collection” concept. A useful tool for users and collections managers in identifying who has what and where.</p> <p>Project has facilitated the development of cross-sectoral links that are being</p>

<p>some of the fundamental issues of collecting, including the scope for agreement of complementary collecting policies and rationalisation, and the feasibility of such a strategy in the context of local strategic interests and user needs. It will also evaluate the effectiveness of the database in helping collecting bodies in decision-making about potential acquisitions and facilitating loans between institutions.</p>	<p>continued informally and through the Textile Network Steering Group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate the effectiveness of the project and its methodology as an exemplar, and its potential application to a larger number of textile collections, or to other subject areas 	<p>Has proved a useful exploration of the methodology and is applicable to other areas.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase access to Scottish textile museum and archive collections through a project website, including a web-based database of collections and a virtual gallery of textile treasures 	<p>Achieved.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the scope for income generation to support the care of textile collections, e.g. through exploiting intellectual property rights 	<p>Not addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish links in both directions between the project and relevant resource and data discovery services funded by JISC, AHRB and others. 	<p>Website may be archived by AHDS http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the strengths of textile collections within Scotland's museums and archives, building on the National Audit¹ of Scotland's Museum 	<p>Achieved through website and database.</p>

¹ The Audit was commissioned by the Scottish Executive as part of its National Culture Strategy and carried out by the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) in 2001. Information about the audit, including reports and methodology, is published by the SMC:
<http://194.200.63.26/audit/index.asp>

collections and the National Register of Archives ² and ARCHON ³ data to identify, strengths, gaps and areas of under-representation and overlaps.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A groundbreaking case study of the process of mapping the Distributed National Textile Collection in Scotland's museums and archives. This will be disseminated in the form of a report, on the lines of the SMC's Museum Issues publications, which will evaluate the methodology of the project and its outcomes, from the feasibility of collaborative collecting, rationalisation and cross-sectoral documentation to the accessibility and user-friendliness of the project website. 	A good documentation of the process. Summary project and seminar reports posted on website together with methodologies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A policy framework for a Distributed National Textile Collection in Scotland's museums and archives and an evaluation of the scope for its practical application. 	STHOL is a useful tool for policy decisions. Scope for framework explored at 3 project seminars. Remains to be taken forward by Network.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation model for rationalisation of collections exploring the methodologies of appraising specific items and types of material within collections. 	Explored at Glasgow seminar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation model for cross-sectoral documentation of specialist items, such as textile sample books, which have been perceived, interpreted and managed differently depending on whether they are held within a museum, archive or library. This will include exemplars of the potential application of the International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)) model to object collections and that of MDA Spectrum to item 	Good model for RSLP Collection Description Schema, SPECTRUM and ISAD(G) standards

² The National Register of Archives is maintained by The National Archives as a searchable guide to the nature and location of archives relating to UK history

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/>

³ARCHON, maintained by The National Archives, is an online directory providing contact information for UK and other archive repositories with collections featured in the National Register of Archives <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>

<p>descriptions of archives. The project will evaluate both the feasibility of the cross-sectoral application of cataloguing standards and its potential benefits for curators, archivists and users of collections.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A database of the collections combining existing catalogues and new records derived from survey data. The database will include approximately 4,000 records at collection/fonds, series and item/object level, together with authority records for manufacturers and designers. The database will incorporate examples of comprehensive collection information, where this is already available. The catalogue data will meet relevant documentation standards, including SPECTRUM and the International Standard Archive Description (ISAD(G)) as appropriate to the needs of each collection. Access points to the database will allow users to locate textiles by factors such as specific designers and manufacturers, styles and periods, places, pattern, composition of fabric, and woven, knitted, printed or embroidered work and object type e.g. shawl or pattern sample book. 	<p>Achieved. A good snapshot but no mechanism for updating. Project has demonstrated the issues of sustainability after the funding has ended.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project website to promote access to the collections, providing a gateway to the online database, a “virtual museum” of digital images of c. 200 “treasures”, online essays on aspects of textile history, a gazetteer of collections featured in the project and links to related collections, including searchable links to art and design and other relevant portals. 	<p>Achieved. Final updates scheduled. Publicity for completion.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation of the potential for income generation though licensing of digital images featured in the “virtual museum”. 	<p>Not addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cross-sectoral network of curators, 	<p>Textile Network may take forward.</p>

<p>archivists, conservators responsible for textile collections and representatives of user groups and other stakeholders The group will apply shared expertise to common challenges in collecting access, documentation and care of textile collections. After the project ends, the network will continue to develop as a platform for joint initiatives such as developing links with Tourism and Enterprise bodies, for instance to develop textile trails and other marketing initiatives, seeking grant and sponsorship income for further sustainable development initiatives and opportunities to exploit intellectual property rights.</p>	
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2. The project

2.1 Context: Scottish Textile Heritage: a holistic approach

The Scottish textile industry has a rich legacy that is preserved within numerous museums and archives in and beyond Scotland. These collections comprise textile machinery, tweeds and tartans, haute couture garments, knitwear, paisley shawls, furnishing fabrics and pattern and sample books, designers' records and other business archives of their manufacturers. Many are relatively unknown and all present significant challenges of access and conservation. Moreover, the decline of textile manufacturing in Scotland, and the consequent need to rescue objects and archives at risk of destruction as a result of company closures, has exacerbated existing pressures on space and resources for many museums and archives with textile collections. The project aimed to explore the potential of cross-sectoral collaboration to address these challenges.

2.2 Scottish Textile Heritage Online: aims and objectives

The overall aim of the Strategic Change Fund was to promote strategic change through funding projects that delivered or tested sustainable outcomes. Projects were required to address one of the following broad themes:

- Building museum audiences
 - Building organisational capacity in museums
 - Increasing access to collections
- and
- Be capable of wider applicability throughout the sector
 - Be capable of evaluation
 - Commit to dissemination of the results

Within this framework, **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** was an innovative pilot project which set out to increase access to collections by achieving the following aims and objectives:

Aims

- **To identify the location, extent, strengths and weaknesses of Scottish textile collections through a pilot survey**, primarily focusing on museums and archives within Scotland but including examples of Scottish textile collections in other UK institutions.
- **To explore the scope for developing a national textiles collecting policy, building cross-sectoral partnerships/collaboration and sharing professional expertise in the management of textile collections.** This draws on the model of highly successful collaborative projects to increase access to a "Distributed National Collection" of archive and library resources developed under the higher education funded Research Support Libraries Programme. The project aimed to go further by exploring some of the fundamental issues of collecting, including the scope for agreement of complementary collecting policies and rationalisation, and the feasibility of such a strategy in the context of local strategic interests and user needs. It also aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the database in helping collecting bodies in decision-making about potential acquisitions and facilitating loans between institutions.

- **To evaluate the effectiveness of the project and its methodology as an exemplar**, and its potential application to a larger number of textile collections, or to other subject areas
- **To increase access to Scottish textile museum and archive collections through a project website, including a web-based database of collections and a virtual gallery of textile treasures**
- **To explore the scope for income generation to support the care of textile collections**, e.g. through exploiting intellectual property rights
- **To establish links** in both directions between the project and relevant resource and data discovery services funded by JISC, AHRB and others.

Objectives

The project set out to deliver the following strategic outcomes

- **An overview of the strengths of textile collections** within Scotland's museums and archives, building on the National Audit of Scotland's Museum collections and the National Register of Archives and ARCHON data to identify, strengths, gaps and areas of under-representation and overlaps.
- **A groundbreaking case study** of the process of mapping the Distributed National Textile Collection in Scotland's museums and archives. This would be disseminated in the form of a report, on the lines of the SMC's Museum Issues publications, which would evaluate the methodology of the project and its outcomes, from the feasibility of collaborative collecting, rationalisation and cross-sectoral documentation to the accessibility and user-friendliness of the project website.
- **A policy framework for a Distributed National Textile Collection in Scotland's museums and archives** and an evaluation of the scope for its practical application.
- **An evaluation model for rationalisation of collections** exploring the methodologies of appraising specific items and types of material within collections
- **An evaluation model for cross-sectoral documentation** of specialist items, such as textile sample books, which have been perceived, interpreted and managed differently depending on whether they are held within a museum, archive or library. This would include exemplars of the potential application of the International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)) model to object collections and that of MDA SPECTRUM to item descriptions of archives. The project would evaluate both the feasibility of the cross-sectoral application of cataloguing standards and its potential benefits for curators, archivists and users of collections.
- **A database of the collections** combining existing catalogues and new records derived from survey data. The database would include approximately 4,000 records at collection/fonds, series and item/object level, together with authority records for manufacturers and designers. The database would incorporate examples of comprehensive collection information, where this is already available. The catalogue data would meet relevant documentation standards, including SPECTRUM and the

International Standard Archive Description (ISAD(G)) as appropriate to the needs of each collection. Access points to the database would allow users to locate textiles by factors such as specific designers and manufacturers, styles and periods, places, pattern, composition of fabric, and woven, knitted, printed or embroidered work and object type e.g. shawl or pattern sample book.

- **A project website to promote access to the collections**, providing a gateway to the online database, a “virtual museum” of digital images of c. 200 “treasures”, online essays on aspects of textile history, a gazetteer of collections featured in the project and links to related collections, including searchable links to art and design and other relevant portals.
- **An evaluation of the potential for income generation** through licensing of digital images featured in the “virtual museum”
- **A cross-sectoral network** of curators, archivists, conservators responsible for textile collections and representatives of user groups and other stakeholders. The group will apply shared expertise to common challenges in collecting access, documentation and care of textile collections. After the project ends, the network will continue to develop as a platform for joint initiatives such as developing links with Tourism and Enterprise bodies, for instance to develop textile trails and other marketing initiatives, seeking grant and sponsorship income for further sustainable development initiatives and opportunities to exploit intellectual property rights.
- **A case study evaluating the effectiveness of the project and its methodology as an exemplar**, and its potential application to a larger number of textile collections, or to other subject areas. The study would review the methodology of the project and its outcomes, including the feasibility of collaborative collecting, rationalisation and the accessibility and user-friendliness of the project website. The project aimed to deliver **an evaluation model for rationalisation of collections** exploring the methodologies of appraising specific items and types of material within collections and **an evaluation model for cross-sectoral documentation** of collections and individual objects and archives such as textile sample books, which have been perceived, interpreted and managed differently depending on whether they are held within a museum, archive or library. This would include exemplars of the potential application of the International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)) model to object collections and that of MDA SPECTRUM to item descriptions of archives. The project aimed to evaluate both the feasibility of the cross-sectoral application of cataloguing standards and its potential benefits for curators, archivists and users of collections.
- **To increase access to Scottish textile museum and archive collections through a project website, <http://www.scottishtextileheritage.org.uk/> including a web-based database of collections**, a “virtual museum” of digital images of c. 200 “treasures”, online essays on aspects of textile history, a gazetteer of collections featured in the project and links to related collections, including searchable links to art and design and other relevant portals. The **database of the collections** would combine existing catalogues and new records derived from survey data. The database would include approximately 4,000 records at collection/fonds, series and item/object level, together with authority records for manufacturers and designers. The database

would incorporate examples of comprehensive collection information, where this was already available. The catalogue data would meet relevant documentation standards, including SPECTRUM and the International Standard Archive Description (ISAD(G)) as appropriate to the needs of each collection. Access points to the database would allow users to locate textiles by factors such as specific designers and manufacturers, styles and periods, places, pattern, composition of fabric, and woven, knitted, printed or embroidered work and object type e.g. shawl or pattern sample book. The project also aimed to **establish links** in both directions between the project and relevant resource and data discovery services funded by JISC, AHRB and others.

- **To establish a cross-sectoral network** of curators, archivists, conservators responsible for textile collections and representatives of user groups and other stakeholders. The group aimed to apply shared expertise to common challenges in collecting, access, documentation and care of textile collections. After the end of the project, it was intended that the network would continue to develop as a platform for joint initiatives such as developing links with Tourism and Enterprise bodies, for instance to develop textile trails and other marketing initiatives, seeking grant and sponsorship income for further sustainable development initiatives and opportunities to exploit intellectual property rights.
- **An evaluation of the potential for income generation to support the care of textile collections** e.g. by exploiting intellectual property rights through licensing of digital images featured in the “virtual museum” .

3. Project Management and progress

3.1 Planning and recruitment

Overall responsibility for project management and monitoring lay with the Project Management Group (PMG). The Group comprised the project team, representatives of all of the project partners and the Scottish Museums Council. During the active phases of the project, the PMG met monthly to set, monitor and review project targets and milestones. The Project Manager was the University Archivist of Heriot-Watt University, as the lead body and budget holder. The group recruited a project team of three staff: a project coordinator, based at Glasgow School of Art, and two documentation and survey officers, one based at Paisley Museum and the other at Heriot-Watt University's Scottish Borders Campus, Galashiels. Appropriately for a cross-sectoral project, the team combined the complementary expertise of an archivist, curator and textile conservator. All were employed on fixed term twelve month contracts from April/May 2003. One of the documentation officers remained in post part time until December 2004.

Prior to the appointment of the team the PMG continued to progress the project plan. Partners shared information about collecting policies and the scope, standard and format of existing catalogues, prioritised target collections identifying catalogues and records that could be easily contributed to the database and priorities for new cataloguing. Partners begin to identify local experts who could be invited to join the user group and participate in the evaluation. These included curators, archivists, other colleagues, donors/depositors, people with a textile industry background, textile, design, technology historians and industrial archaeologists.

3.11 Budget

The project was awarded £115,846. In March 2003, the PMG asked the SCF panel to award the project a further £12,824, as the costs of employing skilled and experienced staff on short term contracts were higher than anticipated and the project plan and it had not anticipated the need for laptops as the most efficient means for the team to undertake cataloguing in the partner museums and archives. The panel made this further award bringing the total grant to £128,670.

3.12 What's in a name?

The original name of the project was *Unlocking Access to Scottish Textile Collections*. There was general consensus among the PMG that although this title expressed one of the key aims of the project, a snappier and more engaging name was needed. With suggestions from the new project team the project took on a new identity: **Scottish Textile Heritage Online**, which more vividly and cogently expressed how the laudable aim of "unlocking access" would be achieved.

3.2 The Documentation and IS/IT specification

Building on the PMG's ground work in scoping cataloguing and IS/IT requirements, the first task of the project team was to undertake an options appraisal to recommend a documentation methodology and plan to achieve the formidable task of mapping Scottish textile collections within the one year time table. The documentation specification included imaging standards for the online gallery and addressed the critical question of the IT strategy for the online collections database.

3.21 Cross-sectoral documentation

The team developed a project data model.⁴ This set out the data structures of the archive, museum, authority records and image sources to be used in the database and identified how these would interlink to allow seamless searching across museum and archive collections. Developing the data model was an important element of the planning process. It helped ensure that the database fulfilled its potential to help researchers to discover links between collections, opening up new avenues of research and previously unknown or underused collections of relevance.

Describing collections at a collection level is a well-established technique of archival description where cataloguing from the general to the specific in a hierarchical manner is standard practice. However, museums traditionally catalogue only at individual object level and the application of collection description techniques is a developing area. This was something the project aimed to explore. Collection level description allows for large bodies of related objects to be described in a structured manner, allowing a broad level of intellectual access for researchers and collection managers.

The project team investigated the various documentation options available, taking into account current professional practices in the museum and archive domains and also lessons learned through similar cross-domain projects elsewhere in the UK. Projects such as the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP) funded *Backstage*⁵ mapping sources for performing arts, *Cecilia*⁶ mapping sources for music and the *Crossroads*⁷ project funded by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (formerly *Resource*) mapping sources for pottery in North Staffordshire, had all already approached the issues of cross-domain working and documentation with varying results.

The project team presented the results of documentation investigations⁸, with examples of their application, to the Project Management Group. The PMG approved the team's recommendation to adopt the Research Support Libraries Programme Collection Description Schema⁹ for collection level description for both museum and archive collections.

3.22 Why use the RSLP Collection Description Schema?

*ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description*¹⁰ already includes collection level as a level of archive description as explained above.¹¹ The team considered the potential for using ISAD(G) data elements for archive and museum collection level description. As the Museums Documentation Association (MDA) SPECTRUM¹² data standard did not include a standard for collection level description there were definite benefits to using a well-established, tried and tested structure such as ISAD(G). However, using the archive standard for museum collections would have imposed one domain's descriptive standard onto another. The team considered that this would have been an unjust solution and contrary to the spirit of cross-domain working.

⁴ See Appendix B: Documentation Methodology options appraisal: Appendix I: Data Model

⁵ <http://www.backstage.ac.uk>

⁶ <http://www.cecilia-uk.org>

⁷ <http://www.crossroads-wm.org.uk>

⁸ See Appendix B: Documentation Methodology options appraisal

⁹ RSLP Collection Description Schema available at <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/metadata/rspl/>

¹⁰ http://www.ica.org/biblio/cds/isad_g_2e.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/metadata/cld/attributes/>

¹² MDA *Spectrum: The UK Museum Documentation Standard*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: MDA, 1997)

Further investigation into the RSLP Collection Description Schema demonstrated that it could be substituted for ISAD(G) at archive collection level and also be applied to museum collections. The Schema mapped its data elements to both ISAD(G) and the Dublin Core metadata standard¹³ and also included additional data elements that would be useful for the purposes of the project. For example, the “Collection Strengths” element would allow the catalogue record to identify the particular strengths of a collection and highlight to users what made it unique or special in a way that is not always obvious within traditional documentation methods.

The Schema did not set down any guidance for lower level description but on the Project team’s recommendation the PMG decided that lower level descriptions would conform to the relevant professional standards: ISAD(G) for archives and Section 7 of MDA SPECTRUM for museum objects.

Using the Collection Schema would also allow the catalogue to present the survey data in a structured way. By treating each surveyed institution as a single “collection”, a very broad description of its holdings could be entered into the database. Within project partner institutions, individual discrete collections, such as gifts to a museum from a particular textile company or substantial collections from a single donor, would benefit from more detailed collection description using the Schema.

3.23 Multi-level description

One of the core aims of **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** was to serve as an evaluation model for cross-sectoral documentation. The project effectively tested the documentation methodology and the potential of cross-domain description to be applied to other subject or collecting areas across museums and archives. Given the short timescale of the project, it was agreed that the team should focus on collection level descriptions to achieve the widest and most inclusive overview of collections at institutional level. In order to test how successfully collection level description could be applied to individual collections within museums and combined with object level catalogue records, the team also undertook more detailed collection, object and archive cataloguing in the project partner institutions for inclusion in the database.

3.24 Authority Records

When considering authority records to provide consistent information about individual people, corporate names and places, the team drew upon previous work to map the relevant section of the SPECTRUM museum standard to the *International Standard Archival Authority Records for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* (ISAAR(CPF))¹⁴ This research showed that these standards were already closely allied.¹⁵ For ease, it was decided to use ISAAR(CPF) as the basic standard with the National Council on Archives *Rules for the Construction of Person, Place and Corporate Names* for indexing purposes.¹⁶

¹³ <http://www.dublincore.org>

¹⁴ International Council on Archives, *International Standard Archival Authority Records for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* (Ottawa 1996)

¹⁵ Peter Eliot, *Standards in Action Book 4: Managing archive collections in museums* (Cambridge: mda, 2002)

¹⁶ National Council On Archives, *Rules for the Construction of Person, Place and Corporate Names* (London: National Council on Archives, 1997). See <http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/pubs.html>

3.25 Museum or archive cataloguing?

The team piloted the documentation methodology producing test records at collection level and for individual objects and archives. This enabled the project partners to compare sample ISAD(G) and Section SPECTRUM catalogue records for the same items. With the approval of the PMG, the project team liaised with each project partner to agree whether to document archive collections managed by curators within museums as museum collections and museum objects managed in archives by archivists as archives, or vice versa, using the appropriate relevant standards. The standards adopted allowed the project to document adequately for its own purposes but also meant the data could be exported to the project partners for integration into their own documentation systems.

3.26 Controlled vocabularies

Another important element of the documentation methodology was the use of subject keywords from a controlled textile vocabulary for indexing and data retrieval purposes. The project team investigated the adoption of an appropriate thesaurus but could find no ideal solution. Terms within some were too broad to be useful and missed out vital terms; other vocabularies were far too specific, detailed and intricate. No dedicated Scottish textile thesaurus was available. After much consideration, the project opted for the Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus.¹⁷ Although a very large thesaurus, its scope extended beyond textiles to include other subject areas covered by the collections. For example, the records of textile production firms could be indexed with terms relating to industry, economy, workers' rights and other terms that a purely textile thesaurus would not include. The trade-off for using the thesaurus was that some terms used had to be American e.g. burlap rather than hessian, and some terms such as knitwear were missing altogether. One of the outcomes of this was to develop a textile glossary within the Online Resources section of the website to allow the project to include specifically Scottish textile terms.

3.27 Choosing software

The original intention of the project had been to devise its own bespoke software solution for documentation based around XML technologies. The well-established Encoded Archival Description (EAD)¹⁸ Document Type Definition (DTD) is already widely used within the archive community and CIMI have been developing an XML Schema for SPECTRUM.¹⁹ However, the limited time scale of the project and the ambitious nature of its documentation needs, as well as the cost of recruiting an appropriate technical specialist, meant that developing a bespoke system was not really a viable option.

Instead it was decided to investigate off-the-shelf solutions that could be customised for the project. The two contenders that could deal with both museum and archives documentation were AdLib and DS CALM.²⁰ Having trialled both systems it was felt that CALM best suited the project's documentation needs. The choice was also affected by CALM's ability to manage digital images and its already having a well-established web front-end with a large user base. Several of the project partners also had CALM systems in various stages of development that would allow for the easy import and export of data.

¹⁷ http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/aat/

¹⁸ <http://www.loc.gov/ead/>

¹⁹ http://www.cimi.org/wg/xml_spectrum/

²⁰ AdLib is produced by AdLib Information systems, see <http://www.adlibsoft.com/>. CALM is produced by DS Ltd, see <http://www.ds.co.uk>

3.28 Digital Imaging

The last section of the project documentation model related to digital images. CALM could handle images attached to object descriptions but the project aimed to develop a separate image gallery that stood apart from the descriptions database yet could link into it as required.

The project team consulted several successful digitisation projects for advice on digital imaging and its accompanying metadata. TheGlasgowStory.com in collaboration with the Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute²¹ at the University of Glasgow and the SCRAN project²² offered much helpful and practical advice. Online, both the AHDS – Visual Arts²³ web pages and those of Technical Advisory Service for Images (TASI) were of great help regarding standards and metadata. A survey of these sites demonstrated that for capturing metadata about images the Dublin Core metadata standard was the standard of choice. For the technical image capture guidance was adopted from the specification developed by HATII for theGlasgowStory.com. This was presented to the Project Partners in the Digitisation Specifications document (see appendix C: 5, 6).

The contracted web company, La Paraguas²⁴, developed a software solution for the image gallery web presentation. Following feed-back from the first session of User Groups, a three stage image gallery was developed. The first stage, following a search, showed a selection of thumbnail images. Clicking on the selected thumbnail would lead to a medium sized image with the accompanying metadata and a hyperlink to the catalogue description in the main project description database. Clicking on the medium image would present the user with a full screen detailed image of the object or archive selected.

3.29 Documentation standards as the project progressed

Thanks to the detailed research and preparation by the project team prior to the start of documentation, very little of the database structure and the documentation templates needed to be changed.

CALM proved able to manage the cataloguing as set out in the data model. It conformed to all the necessary standards and allowed the team to customise or add new fields as necessary. For example, the “Collection Strengths” field within the Collection schema did not exist as a default option field within CALM but was easily added.

CALM allowed other levels of functionality. Fields found within ISAD(G) records could be inserted within SPECTRUM records and vice versa. The project team considered that for ISAD(G) records it would be useful to insert the SPECTRUM “Dimension” field. Although ISAD(G) allows for the same information with its “Extent and medium of description field” it was felt to be of more use to the researcher and collection manager to have this documented separately. For example, pattern books were often appearing within archive

²¹ <http://www.hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk/>

²² <http://www.scran.org.uk>

²³ <http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/>

²⁴ Now AJ Media <http://www.ajmedia.ltd.uk/>

collections and the dimensions were felt to be important enough to be documented explicitly in a separate field.

Imaging and capture of appropriate image metadata was left to the Project Partners to be undertaken in line with guidance from the project team. The project team then edited all image descriptions to ensure consistency before uploading onto the website.

3.3 Mapping Scotland's textile heritage

A fundamental aim of the project was to identify the location, extent, strengths and weaknesses of Scottish textile collections through a pilot survey of museums, archive repositories and other heritage organisations in Scotland.

3.31 The survey

The team developed a questionnaire (Appendix D) as the first step in the process of including non-partner organisations with textile related collections in the database.

This was sent as a mail-out, with a covering letter, to make museums and archives aware of the project and invite them to participate. The questionnaire was used as a tool to gather information on the collections, their documentation, including images, interpretation and access. Although it was developed as a first step, to be followed by phone conversations and/or site visits, the combination of the questionnaire with the National Audit information in most cases proved sufficient to be able to develop a record on the organisation for the database.

3.32 Developing the questionnaire

The team scoped out the information needed, and undertook research into previous surveys for museums and archives. Some of the survey organisers were contacted to learn from their experiences of using a questionnaire in data gathering and avoid some of the pitfalls they had encountered.

The team drafted a first version and discussed it with the Project Partners. Their feedback proved extremely useful, as it helped the team to get the balance right between issues of relevance for museums and those for archives. Several amendments were made and the Project Partners then piloted the questionnaire. This resulted in a few more minor amendments before the questionnaire was ready to be issued.

The team was conscious of the risk that recipients might perceive the questionnaire might be as 'yet another bit of paper to be filled out'. In order to keep the time and effort of filling in the questionnaire to a minimum and thereby encourage a good response rate, the aim was, therefore, only to gather data that could not be obtained elsewhere. As detailed below in section 3.33, the team produced a summary of the textile related collections recorded in the SMC's National Audit and/or The National Archive's National Register of Archives for each museum or archive surveyed and sent this out as an individually tailored mailing with each questionnaire. This approach appeared to be well received. Not only did it demonstrate care and preparation, but also gave the recipients the opportunity to check the accuracy of the data already published about the collections and respond with corrections and additions. This meant that the project database would be as up-to-date as possible.

3.33 Identifying textile collections

In total, 295 questionnaires were sent out.

The SMC's recent National Audit was used to select the museums to be targeted and some 138 museums were identified with textiles or textile related material in their collection. The Project Team created a summary sheet of the National Audit information and this was sent with a questionnaire to the 138 museums. In addition to filling out the questionnaire the museums were asked to indicate any changes to the National Audit information so that the team were working with as accurate data as possible.

All 157 archives in Scotland were approached. A summary of The National Archives National Register of Archives listing of textile collections for each repository was sent with the questionnaire and archives were asked to check whether this information is still up-to-date. Archives that were not listed as having any textile collection in the National Register of Archives were still approached as no thorough survey similar to that of the National Audit had been undertaken in recent times. The use of the National Register for Archives allowed identification of some other UK repositories outwith Scotland with material related to Scotland, such as the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester.

3.34 The response

113 Questionnaires were returned: a response rate of 37%. Of these, 62 came from museums (43% of all museums approached), and 51 came from archives (32% of all archives approached).

All but one survey respondent gave permission for their data to be included in the database. Each institution was represented by a single record describing their textile related collections. As a result of this, some 112 organisations are represented in addition to the project partners.

According to the National Audit some 26 museums had textile related collections with over 1000 items (this included 2 project partners). These museums, together with one or two smaller but very relevant museums, were approached through site visit or phone contact to gather additional information that was used to flesh out the information from the questionnaire and make the project database entry as complete as possible.

Some 32 respondents returned a collecting policy (28% of all respondents). The majority of collecting policies came from museums: 25 policies. Of these policies, 26 refer to textile collections, often in a separate section (81% of all collection policies).

3.35 A snapshot of textile collecting in Scotland

The response to the survey enabled the database to provide a representative overview of the scope, scale and distribution of textile related museum and archive collecting in Scotland. Unsurprisingly, the findings indicated that the distribution and strengths of collections reflected the geographical areas where the relevant industries had been most concentrated. To take the industries most prominently represented in the database:

Industry	Distribution
Tweed:	10 organisations in predominantly Scottish Borders and Harris.
	4 Museums & related organisations, 6 Archives
Jute:	10 organisations in Central Scotland and Dundee.
	3 museums & related organisations, 7 archives

Shawls:	12 organisations in Central and South of Scotland
	7 museums & related organisations, 5 archives

By contrast, needlework collections were held by 14 organisations throughout the country. This may be due to two factors. First, needlework, exemplified by fine embroidery, is as much a domestic craft as an industrial specialism. Second, many of the needlework collections recorded were originally part of one collection established by the Needlework Development Scheme, which disbanded and distributed its collection in 1961. The fact that the database has reunited these dispersed gems of hand embroidery in an online “virtual collection” is one example of the value of the survey in providing both an overview of the strengths of collections and a gazetteer for researchers and visitors.

The extensive body of data gathered in the course of the survey was put to effective use in the Industry and Gazetteer maps showing the distribution of collections, in the Resources section of the website. Analysis of the data enabled the project team to select themes and recruit subject experts to write the specialist essays that illustrate and reinforce the findings of the survey, adding real value to the website as a resource.

3.4 The website

A key element of the project was the website and online database. The website, <http://www.scottishtextileheritage.org.uk/> contains the following elements:

- Searchable database with over 3000 descriptions of archive and museum collections, including business records, costume, machinery, art works, shawls, tweed, print and tartan
- Image gallery with over 400 images
- Resources section containing essays on a wide range of textile related subjects, bibliographies and maps showing the distribution of the textile collections across Scotland.

Having considered the merits of employing in-house developers or external contractors to develop the website, the PMG put this work out to tender. The successful contractor, Glasgow based La Paraguas, now called AJ Media, undertook the website development and the design of promotional material. This included the colourful and attractive **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** corporate identity banner with its distinctive “connecting thread” theme, which was used as a document header, in leaflets and on posters. Heriot-Watt University Information and Computing Services (UICS) agreed to host the project webserver.

Meanwhile, in order to give the development of the project website a head start, a representative of one of the project partners registered the domain name, www.scottishtextiles.org.uk. This allowed the structure and functionality of a test website to be extensively tested so that once a web designer was appointed, work could proceed swiftly towards the finished product. The website went live in October 2003 and the database, image gallery and online resources sections were populated by May 2004.

Sadly, when the domain name came up for renewal in 2005, due to unforeseeable circumstances it proved difficult to transfer the name from the original individual registrant to the institution, Heriot-Watt University, which had agreed to host the site. The University registered a new domain name <http://www.scottishtextileheritage.org.uk/> and employed an agency to try to secure the old domain name when it was freed up later in

the year, so that the site could revert to the former URL or users could be directed to the new one. Unfortunately, another body registered the name as soon as it became available. This experience demonstrates the need for project domain names to be legally registered by institutions rather than individuals. The change of URL was publicised through the Scottish Museums Council and other avenues. However although search engines readily identify the **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** website, there remains the need to promote the website further. It was hoped that promotion of the final version of the project website would have been completed by the end of 2005. However, the absence of dedicated project staff to progress this has been keenly felt in the light of other institutional priorities. The final update of the project website has been commissioned along with posters and leaflets celebrating the outputs of the project for distribution to the project participants. This timing provides the opportunity to take on the recommendations of the external evaluator as to how these resources can be promoted further.

Another issue that had not been anticipated at the start of the project was the need for editorial proofreading. This was largely due to the number of contributors to the site. Two professional editors were commissioned to edit the website standardising the format of bibliographic references on online essays, correcting any typographical and grammatical errors, checking web links, cross references between records, and dates. It is a tribute to the systematic and thorough approach of the project team to the development and use of consistent documentation standards that the scale of editorial work required was minimal.

Heriot-Watt University has undertaken to maintain the project website without additions for five years and to pay the ongoing support costs of the CALM software for this period. The PMG has agreed that the Scottish Textile Network Steering Group, formed in September 2005, should take on the task of agreeing an archive strategy: one option is to deposit the website, database and associated metadata to be preserved and accessible within the digital archive repository provided by the Visual Arts Data Service. The Steering Group is also investigating possible mechanisms for partners and other museums and archives to update their collection information, and explore avenues of additional funding to add data from additional partners.

3.5 Addressing strategic collecting issues

The PMG organised three events in the course of the project to progress the objective of developing a framework for coordinated collecting and realising the concept of distributed Scottish textile collection. Reports of these seminars and meetings can be found in Appendices G, H and I. The first seminar, Collections Knowledge and Strategic Collecting held in June 2004, brought together collections managers and users to explore the themes of sharing information about collections and examining how the collecting process could become more collaborative. It was agreed that these issues needed to be further explored by the sector. This task was taken forward in two meetings for collections managers held in May and September 2005. A key outcome was the formation of a steering group to explore the practicality of setting up a cross-sectoral textile collections network.

4. Outcomes: a sustainable network?

Scottish Textile Heritage Online successfully delivered its aims of achieving an overview of textile collections in Scotland's museums and archives and promoting access to these collections through the website and an online database of collections. It has laid the foundations of a sustainable textile collections network, bringing together museum and archive professionals who previously had limited contact with one another. It has demonstrated the value and the need for cross-sectoral collaboration between museum and archive staff in managing hybrid collections that undercut traditional object/archive classifications. The project provides a well documented exemplar and evaluation model for cross-sectoral documentation of collections. It breaks new ground by offering a valuable case study of collection level description for museums.

The project has proved to be an effective demonstration of the value, to users and collections managers, of a national database of textile related collections but has revealed the lack of opportunities for continuation funding that would extend, consolidate and update the mapping of collections. A key issue identified in the course of the project is the lack of sources of grant aid to continue to update the database of collections. For example, the eligibility criteria of the Heritage Lottery Fund did not support the continuation of an existing project. A sustainable source of funding is critical to maintain the comprehensive and detailed overview of collections needed to identify strengths weaknesses and gaps in collections across Scotland and inform a strategic collecting policy. Experience of the project also illustrated the challenges for the host and partners of completing the final stages after the funding for the project team came to an end.

Scottish Textile Heritage Online has fulfilled an important strategic function by articulating key issues in developing a distributed national textile collection and the practical considerations and challenges this presents. Due to the ambitious scope of the project and its limited timescale, the detailed and delicate issues of how museums and archives can coordinate collecting and rationalisation remain to be taken forward. A Scottish Textile Network Steering Group has been set up to consider how this can be achieved. The Steering Group is considering options for archiving the project website. It is also investigating possible mechanisms for partners and other museums and archives to update their collection information, and explore avenues of additional funding to add data from additional partners.

It is hoped that the challenges explored through **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** can be addressed by continued cross-sectoral collaboration through a Scottish Textile Network and informally through the new relationships made and existing contacts strengthened in the course of this exciting project.