



PRESS RELEASE - 28th January 2014
for immediate release

Understanding Audiences: The Popularity of Museum Galleries

In 2013 **Arts Council England** funded the **Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA)** Subject Specialist Network to commission an unbiased study to help understand the audience profile and relative popularity of different gallery types in museums with mixed collections. Information was collected from visitors relating to their experience of these museums and the reasons why particular galleries were popular with their dominant audiences. Here we present the findings of the independent research conducted by **Jenesys Associates Ltd.**

10 museums participated in the study. They were selected to be representative of mixed museums throughout the UK. An e-survey questionnaire was completed by 534 visitors across all museums and 253 face-to-face interviews were conducted with visitors at 6 museums.

The evaluation report offers an unbiased overview of visitors' impressions of the display of different disciplines in mixed museums. Key findings include the gallery types museum visitors describe as their most and least favourite, how preferences are influenced by demographic variables and what aspects of these displays visitors find appealing and off-putting; all key messages for museums containing each gallery type.

Visitors identified natural sciences, art and live animal galleries as their favourite types of exhibit and described art, natural sciences and local history as their least favourite gallery types. The fact that some of the same galleries appear on both most and least favourite lists suggests that audiences are highly heterogeneous in their tastes. The breakdown of audience profiles further demonstrates that different galleries appeal to different demographics, with each offering something of value to a particular user group. Furthermore, qualitative feedback from users provided additional insight into reasons for preferences or lack of interest, ranging from the subject matter to the quality of presentation.

Overall, the findings of this report offer many opportunities for museums with mixed collections, as well as museum professionals associated with particular subject specialisms, to better understand their visitors and the perceptions they hold. The report is presented in its entirety to ensure that colleagues have full access to the details, but an executive summary is provided at the start for convenience.

NatSCA welcomes any responses or questions that arise – please email Paolo Viscardi and Jack Ashby at press@natsca.org

The full report can be downloaded in pdf form by following this link:
<http://natsca.org/sites/default/files/publications-full/Evaluation-Report-Museum-Gallery-Preferences-Final.pdf>

For more about NatSCA, visit <http://www.natsca.org>, find us on Twitter [@Nat_SCA](https://twitter.com/Nat_SCA) and on Facebook at [/NaturalSciencesCollectionsAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/NaturalSciencesCollectionsAssociation).

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For further information, images or other requests, email press@natsca.org

To speak to a representative of NatSCA please contact Paolo Viscardi (PViscardi@horniman.ac.uk) or call 0750 759 5578.

Notes to the Editor

NatSCA is the subject specialist network for natural science collections in the UK and Ireland. A registered charity (Reg. No. 1098156), we support and act as advocates for natural science collections and the staff that work with them.

The UK holds in the region of 600 natural science collections in museums, universities, schools and research centres in every part of the nation. Some organisations hold many millions of specimens and use cutting edge research techniques to understand major global issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss, others may hold just a few dozen specimens used to inspire children and adults to better appreciate the nature that surrounds them. Natural science collections are essential to our understanding of nature's diversity. They allow research into the changing face of life on Earth over tens, hundreds, thousands and millions of years. They provide a way for us to answer some of the biggest questions in life. Collections have a value to our society and NatSCA is here to help ensure that they are cared for and used in the best ways possible.

NatSCA formed in 2003 from the merger of the Natural Sciences Conservation Group (NSCG) and the Biological Curator's Group (BGC) which were established in 1995 and 1975 respectively. We have been supporting natural sciences collections in the UK and beyond for almost 40 years.

Website: <http://www.natsca.org>

Twitter: [@Nat_SCA](https://twitter.com/Nat_SCA)

Facebook: [/NaturalSciencesCollectionsAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/NaturalSciencesCollectionsAssociation)

Arts Council England

Website: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

Twitter: [@ace_national](https://twitter.com/ace_national)

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Jenesys Associates Ltd

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