



THACKRAY MUSEUM OF MEDICINE

Research Strategy 2021-2025



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Background

As the UK's leading independent medical museum, the Thackray Museum of Medicine wants people to be able to use our collection for research as easily as possible and to the greatest public benefit. This strategy sets out why and how we value research and describes what we need to do over the next five years to provide the best possible access and opportunities for researchers. The strategy has been written by the museum in consultation with researchers and people with a stake in supporting research in medical history – particularly the Thackray Medical Research Trust.

Both the Museum and the Thackray Medical Research Trust share a purpose to promote public understanding of how the history of medicine and medical supplies has impacted on our lives and how it continues to shape our future. Promoting and communicating research is an important way in which we can help achieve this purpose. This strategy sets out our vision for research over the next five years; our strategic objectives and the research culture we want to encourage. It also describes our own research priorities over the period as well as some of the research areas that we would like to explore with others.

Our Vision for Research

By 2025 we want the Thackray Museum of Medicine to have established itself as a centre for excellence in research into the material culture and history of medical products and supplies. We want to become a unique locus for academic researchers, people working in medicine, medical supply trades, educators, public policy makers and members of the community to come together to carry out research for the benefit of all.

For us, excellence means not only that research will be based on an excellent collection and carried out to a high quality but also that it will be embedded within and inform all aspects of the museum's programme as well as becoming a relevant and useful part of the wider academic, civic and community life of the region. We want the museum to become a natural first port of call for student research. We want the museum to become the primary source of out of class research for schools studying the history of medicine. We want decision-makers and planners to be using research to take a longer and better-informed view of issues relating to public health and medical business development. Most of all, we want members of the public to participate in research that is meaningful and useful in helping them to imagine and build a healthier and more resilient future.

Our Values: An Asset-Based Research Culture

For us research can be defined as any way in which people use our collections, library or archive to develop new ideas, new understanding or new perspectives about the world we share. This can range from better understanding our personal place in the world, through researching family or community history, through helping to develop scientific or technological ideas to 'blue sky' investigations into the nature of what makes us human. We want research at the museum to be with our communities, by our communities and for our communities. Traditionally most of our researchers are from the academic community and are concerned with the history of technology, medicine or disability and they remain an important audience for us. However, to help open up access to research to as many people as possible and for the widest possible public benefits, we look at all times to value equity

and find ways to put research to the service of a wide range of partners, including our close neighbours. We will do this by promoting the following values:

- We will prioritise support for research that proposes outputs and outcomes that not only help people achieve positive change but which also support the positive transformation of our own organisation.
- We will encourage research that reflects different points of view and which promotes underserved and dissenting voices within the relevant subject areas.
- We will listen to everyone's ideas of research with an open mind, recognising we are primarily an asset to serve the collective public interest.
- We will make learning from research central to the culture and decision-making of our organisation.
- We will promote a long view – back and forward – of contemporary issues relating to medicine and healthcare.

Our Strategic Objectives for Research

Over the next five years the following seven key objectives will help us create a stronger infrastructure for research that is accessible, collaborative and focussed on public benefits: :

1. *We will make our collection accessible online.* The Museum's collection is one of the strongest in any medical museum in the UK and includes objects and archives of national and international significance.
2. *We will improve access to our archive* The Museum holds important archives, of the Thackray Company, other medical supply companies such as Downs and Lindseys, the Oxford Knee Archive, alongside business records of GPs and pharmacies and personal archives of individual medical practitioners. We will investigate options for establishing and funding an archivist and accessible online catalogue of our archives as well as digitisation plans for key items.
3. *We will establish channels for publishing, sharing and transmitting research.* To help ensure both that our own museum plans and practice are informed by research across the board and that its wider public utility can be realised, we will create multiple channels for research outputs.
4. *We will establish a facility for action-led and collaborative community research at the Museum.* Using the opportunity of the 'Core' community resource at the Museum, we will work in partnership with local agencies, social prescribing providers and community organisations to plan and deliver research to promote community wellbeing and resilience.
5. *We will re-establish the UK Medical Collections Group.* To help extend the recognition of our collections across research circles, we will re-launch the UK-wide subject specialist network of medical collections and museums with a focus on better understanding and promoting the wider role of medical museums post-pandemic.

6. *We will grow public medical capital.* Following on from the museum's refurbishment, we will carry out a programme of community engagement, formal and informal learning activities. These will be underpinned by research into how the museum can grow the 'medical capital;' of our public – i.e. their capacity to develop greater understanding of the importance of medicine in their lives; to put that understanding to use to achieve positive outcomes and to influence the development of medicine and healthcare within their communities.

7. *We will promote the museum as a research facility.* We will establish regular research open days to promote the museum as a research facility to academic, industry and community researchers.

Support for Research Activities

We will support research that originates from three main areas:

- Museum-led research that is generated and led by the museum. This will either be funded from the museum's operational budget or else funds will be raised by the museum for discrete projects.
- Partnership research. This will comprise initiatives developed in partnership with other agencies, institutions and individual researchers. In the main, these initiatives will be externally funded, with some limited seed funding provided on occasion by the museum. As a general rule for partnership projects, the museum will seek full cost recovery of any research initiative through project funding.
- 3rd party research generated outside the museum. We will continue (and improve our facility) to be a resource for externally generated research initiatives by specialist and non-specialist researchers.

Detailed guidance on how we will provide access and support to researchers is set out in the museum's Access Policy.

Appendix 1

Action Plan

Strategic Objective	Action	Museum, Partnership or 3 rd -party led	Start (Year 1-5)	Finish Complete
1. We will make our collection accessible online.	We will provide an online searchable catalogue for objects and library collections.	Museum led	1	1
	We will develop a strategy for providing online access to archive collections.	Museum led	2	2
	We will create a digitisation strategy for enhanced digital objects and develop a co-curation strategy for widening access and using digitisation and online access to allow more stories, voices and perspectives to be reflected in our online collections.	Museum led	2	2
2. We will improve access to our archives.	We will create a development plan to improve access to archive collections including fundraising for collections management work; improving physical access; digital documentation of collections.	Museum led	1	2
	Carry out a needs analysis and research into our archives to identify priorities and support detailed plans for archive management and access	Museum led	2	2
3. We will establish channels for publishing, sharing and transmitting research.	We will devise a list of priority areas within collections which we would like to develop through collaborative research and review it annually.	Museum led	1	5

Strategic Objective	Action	Museum, Partnership or 3 rd -party led	Start (Year 1-5)	Finish Complete
	We will develop the museum's website to include regular selected research outputs (including Blogs, online exhibits)	Museum led	2	5
4. We will establish a facility for action-led and collaborative community research at the Museum	Set up the new space for co-creation and community within the museum – Core –and use it to foster new and stronger relationships with local people, agencies, social prescribing providers and community organisations.	Museum led	1	5
	Scope funding opportunities and make applications to provide sustainable community-focussed staffing and programmes in order to maintain strong local relationships.	Museum led	2	4
	Launch an initial call for proposals for participatory, community-led, artist-led and action research around an agreed set of research questions	Partnership	2	3
5. We will re-establish the UK Medical Collections Group.	We will re-launch the UK-wide subject specialist network of medical collections and museums with a focus on better understanding and promoting the wider social role of medical museums post-pandemic	Museum led	1	1
	We will co-deliver a seminar/conference to explore the place of medical museums post pandemic and raise public awareness of research and other benefits	Partnership	1	1

Strategic Objective	Action	Museum, Partnership or 3 rd -party led	Start (Year 1-5)	Finish Complete
	We will seek funding for (and deliver if successful) a major collaborative action research programme to create evidence for future priorities and support for medical museums	Partnership	2	4
6. We will grow public medical capital.	Following on from the museum's refurbishment, we will carry out a programme of community engagement, formal and informal learning activities. The evaluation of these programmes will form the basis of our research into how the museum can best grow and evaluate the 'medical capital;' of our public – i.e. their capacity to develop greater understanding of the importance of medicine in their lives; to put that understanding to use to achieve positive outcomes and to influence the development of medicine and healthcare within their communities (see detailed delivery plan within the Healthy Future Activity Plan)	Museum led	2	4
7. We will actively promote the museum as a research facility.	Produce Access policy and plan with digital and onsite access guidelines and approach to restricted material	Museum led	1	1
	Carry out work to improve the accessibility and practical provisions for researchers on site	Museum led	1	1
	We will establish at least one research open day per year to promote the museum as a research facility to academic, industry and community researchers.	Museum led	1	5

Appendix 2

Current Research Activity

The table below summarises current collaborative research projects in planning or delivery at the time of writing

Title	Funder	Description	Institution/s	Main contact
Confirmed/in delivery				
Transnational comparison of the partial knee replacement surgery in the late 20th century	Leeds University Cultural Institute	Collaborative PhD	Leeds HPS	Dr Jamie Stark and Professor Graeme Gooday (HPS, University of Leeds)
Hematopolitics: A Comparative Study of Reciprocity and Exclusion in the Blood Economy	Wellcome small grant	Comparative work with Japanese & Korean blood services; interested in working with multicultural communities in Leeds and perhaps Chinese (if our link with china comes to anything) and our collections around blood	Leeds cross departmental team: School of Languages, Cultures and Societies; HPS department - Janie Stark; medical school	Dr Jieun Kim, (Lecturer in Japanese Studies, University of Leeds)
Future of Care	AHRC	This project employs a critical medical humanities approach to develop a new research area -- posthuman care – that responds to the emerging phenomenon of robot care. It examines care robots, both real and imagined, as philosophically provocative objects that challenge humanist definitions of care.	University of Leeds	Dr Amelia DeFalco, (Associate Professor of Medical Humanities School of English, University of Leeds)

Title	Funder	Description	Institution/s	Main contact
Proposed/in development				
Curating for Change	NLHF	Curating for Change aims to change the way disability history is represented in collections and in making exhibitions more accessible to a wider range of people. This project aims to establish a series of fellows, placed at eight museums across the UK (including TMM). The funded development phase will consult with a range of Museums, specialist networks and disabled people's organisations, to get a deep understanding of how the project can bring about lasting positive change for both individuals and the Museum and Heritage sector	Screen South/Accentuate	Esther Fox (Curating for Change)
State Provision of Prosthetic Limbs in the Two World Wars	Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded Collaborative Doctoral Partnership - major partner National Archives	In the event of the student being interested in establishing a career in the cultural sector, the additional 12 months of funding will be used enable the student to undertake a three-month placement at a museum such as the Thackray Museum, which has a number of prosthetic holdings and a related archive. The placement will provide the student with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in curation, education and public history through working with curatorial and research teams to develop projects related this material. Such projects could include enhancing the cataloguing of the archive, creating an educational resource for the museum's use or developing public engagement programmes aimed at particular groups such as prosthetic users. The student will be integrated into relevant teams, utilising original research from the PhD to directly inform their work and output. We hope that a link with the Thackray and its fine collections (of prostheses and of related trade catalogues) might help us get the funding approved for the PhD studentship in the final round of applications.	Leeds HPS & School of History	Prof Graeme Gooday (professor of history and philosophy of Technology) & Dr Jessica Meyers, (Associate Professor of Modern British History, University of Leeds)

Title	Funder	Description	Institution/s	Main contact
About Face	UKRI Future Leaders, Department of History at the University of York.	Based in History at the University of York, which explores the ethics and emotions of face transplants and facial surgery. The project involves extended surgical teams, charities, researchers and activists across the UK.	University of York	Dr Fay Bound Alberti(UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, University of York)
Instrumentalising Electronic Sound: Sound Technologies in the Twentieth Century	AHRC	New ways of creating, experiencing, understanding, and interacting with sound have been invented. This project explores the technologies which make that possible.	University of Leeds and Bradford Media Museum	Dr James Moody, (School of Music, University of Leeds) Dr Annie Jamison (Senior Curator, Science and Media Museum), Professor Graeme Gooday (HPS, University of Leeds)
TBC	TBC	Exploring the history of medical advertising	University of Leeds	Dr Adrian Wilson (Senior Lecturer, HPS, University of Leeds)
Medicine Myth and Memory	Trinity Challenge	An action research proposal to the Trinity Challenge 'Cutting Through the Infodemic' research challenge that seeks to reposition Medical Museums as effective assets for communities to understand better and to respond to public health emergencies – establishing a trusted network and models for collaborative community action, informed by a long view of the underlying scientific, medical and social issues at play.	UK Medical Collections Group Museum Dr Guislain, Ghent	Caroline Hamsom (Anaesthesia Museum)