HOW IMPROVING DOCUMENTATION, AS PART OF THE REMIT OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT, CAN INCREASE INTELLECTUAL ACCESS TO MUSEUM COLLECTIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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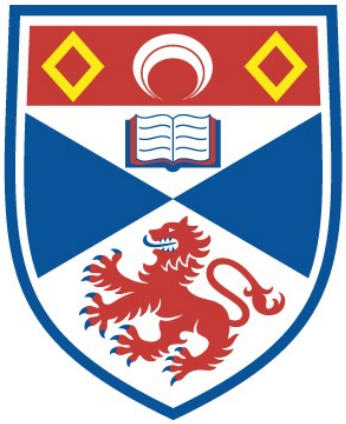

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How improving documentation, as part of the remit of collections management, can increase intellectual access to museum collections for the purpose of academic research.

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MPhil Museum and Gallery Studies
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Museums facilitate and carry out research . . . They organise and manage information to make it accessible.

Museums Association, Code of Ethics for Museums

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Abstract

As part of the remit of collections management the responsibility for documenting and recording objects in museum collections is fundamental. A shifting focus on museum priorities in recent years, however, has led to the acknowledged neglect of collections and specifically collections-based research. Sector and institution led policies are now being put in place to reverse this situation, but accountable and relevant use of collections as a resource for research can only be achieved if basic documentation exists to support access. This paper will demonstrate how intellectual access to museum collections, for the purpose of academic research, can be increased through improved documentation. Museums must prioritise fundamental principles of documentation in order to establish collections as relevant and reliable resources for research. Only when Museums are accountable for both the physical and intellectual integrity of objects in their collections can they confidently allow access to the collection and related archives.

By using the example of an active project, the primary goal of which is to highlight the research potential of public collections in the UK, together with the working examples of the National Galleries of Scotland and the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, standards of policy and practice will be reviewed. To give context to the wider discussions, a case study in two parts will look first at the history and development of Glasgow Museums, a local authority service, before evaluating the practical experience of carrying out an enhanced documentation project on a select area of Glasgow's fine art collection. Current practice will be evaluated, followed by appropriate criticism and recommendations. Comparisons will be drawn between the three institutional examples used, considering their individual successes and failures.

Introduction

A museum, as an institution, is defined principally by its responsibility to care for a collection of objects. Its success as an institution is defined further by the accountable use of this collection, making objects both physically and intellectually accessible to the widest possible audience. 'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.' [1] In effect, museums are expected to use their collections to inform people, realising the potential of objects to communicate knowledge about the past, present and in anticipation of the future. Collections can describe and explore the history of people and cultures, evolution and the natural world and, by illustrating experience with objects, they can make complex theories and ideas easier to understand. In order to do this successfully, however, museums must underpin their wide-ranging activities with an ever-increasing knowledge base. Knowing the objects in a collection is fundamental, but learning the stories and histories associated with each individual object enriches the collection, adding to it another dimension. Therefore museums are responsible not only for the accountable use of physical objects, but also for the effective management and dissemination of related information. The need for museums to produce records that are reliable and citable has been recognised by this paper and a responsibility on the part of museums to care for both the intellectual and physical integrity of the objects that comprise collections will be established.

In recent years political policy has placed great emphasis on principles such as education for all and lifelong learning. Well placed as museums are to contribute to the fulfilment of these objectives, it has been argued, however, that their participation in various education programmes has led to a neglect of core collections-based activities; on-going research, in particular, has declined in many non-national institutions. Concurrent with the completion of this paper, the Museums Association published a consultation document inviting museum professionals to contribute opinion on how museum practice might be improved in order to re-address collections-related issues such as acquisition, interpretation, management, documentation and skills development. 'Collections are central to everything that museums do and all that they might

[1] Museums Association, *Code of Ethics for Museums*, 1st edition, London, 2002

achieve . . . Too many collections are unused or effectively unusable at the present time: not displayed, researched or documented in accessible ways, and not understood.' [2] In anticipation of the findings of the Museums Association's consultation and the report to be published in 2005, this paper explores many of the issues presently under discussion, using examples of an active project, national and university institutions and a local authority museum case study to give context to the central theme of how basic documentation, as part of the remit of collections management, can increase intellectual access to collections for the purpose of academic research. It will be argued that museums must recognise the validity of on-going in-house collections-based research and must make an appropriate sector-wide commitment to building frameworks that will better support academic research.

In order to promote the usability of their collections as a resource for research, museums must be able to account for the objects in their care and collections management is now accepted as a standard museum service. Responsible for reconciling the use of a collection with caring for it, fundamental to the role of collections management is documentation: knowing what is in the collection, how each object came to be there, what information the museum holds on its collection and the legal status of all objects comprising the collection are key factors in effective and accountable management. Although ideally documentation records should describe all of this information, often their content has been compromised through neglect. The tasks of manually editing and managing collections information using paper-based records are huge and often lead to the abandonment of good practice in the face of overwhelming backlogs. Hope that the introduction of computerised databases in museums would help to resolve both the inaccurate state of many existing catalogue records and the retrospective documentation of objects collected, but not yet documented, saw the rapid development of computerised documentation systems. How the evolution from paper-based to computerised and, most recently, to digitised practice has impacted on the ability of museums to utilise and make accessible their catalogue resources will be explored, both by a general overview and through the use of examples together with a case-study. The pressure on museums to provide remote access to their collections and related archives is constantly growing. Museums must be realistic about the need to put information on-line and this paper will demonstrate the impact that digitisation has had on the museum sector. It will also

[2] Museums Association, *Collections for the Future: Consultation Document*, www.museumsassociation.org

highlight why failure on the part of museums to provide remote access to collections information compromises intellectual access.

The National Inventory Research Project (NIRP) is an active initiative looking to redress the perceived imbalance between current museum priorities and scholarship. With the support of the National Gallery, London, this project is promoting research into regional art collections throughout Britain, creating an inventory of paintings that will ultimately be available through an on-line searchable database. The success of the NIRP will rely on basic documentation records, reviewed and edited for each painting within the project remit, being made available to a vast on-line audience, thus raising awareness of the potential for new and continuing collections-based research into these works of art. Working in partnership with the National Gallery, London, the NIRP hopes to benefit from skills-sharing and guidance, following established standards of best practice in both documentation and research.

Best practice is commonly expected of national institutions and how the National Galleries of Scotland approaches and implements its collections management policies will be assessed, in light of its desire to be recognised as a centre of excellence. With an active research programme, the National Galleries frequently publishes research undertaken by its curatorial staff and its most recent blockbuster exhibition is an interesting example of how collections-based research can culminate in a publicly accessible display of knowledge. Wider distribution of this collections information, however, is limited by the Galleries' lack of digital access to its collections. It is interesting to consider how the Galleries are aiming to serve both the visiting public and other museums better by improving access and participating in partnerships, referencing both their Scottish Executive funding and the objectives outlined in their most recent Corporate Plan.[3]

How, as a university museum, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, benefits from its on-campus location, reconciling this with its nature as a museum, has given rise to an interesting internal attitude to both collections-based research and collections management. Focused on maximising the research potential of its collections, the Hunterian is

[3] Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, *National Galleries of Scotland Corporate Plan 2003-2008*, Edinburgh, 2003

keen to facilitate academic research, both through physical access to objects and by building key digital access on the strength of exemplary documentation records. It is a leading institution in the development of digital media and remote searching of all its catalogue records is currently possible through use of its website; development of this and related digital access opportunities is on-going. Curatorial ownership of the computerised catalogue, together with shared responsibility for the implementation of collections management policies, appears to have shaped the Hunterian's approach to using its documentation records to serve the wider goals of the museum. Exploring the Hunterian as a museum within a teaching institution highlights the innumerable opportunities for sustained intellectual access to the Hunterian's collection. How the Hunterian addresses this potential reveals a true collections-based focus within an institution that has built its service on a foundation of knowledge.

Finally, a practical case study based in Glasgow Museums will be used in order to give context to the discussion points raised above, assessing the impact that improving documentation can have on issues relating to both collections management and wider intellectual access. As the largest local authority museums service in the UK, reference to Glasgow Museums will also allow for comparisons to be drawn between the collections management policies and practices of three different museum types: local authority, national and university museums. Within the context of its historical background, how Glasgow Museums has developed into the institution it is today will be discussed, with emphasis in particular upon its education, access and inclusion policies as well as its growing focus on research.

Ultimately, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate how intrinsic documentation can allow a museum to develop access to its collections in order to support on-going academic research: the need for museums to anticipate external academic researchers and provide for their needs through collections-management and documentation policies will be demonstrated. By considering relevant reports and literature, relating historical practice to the developing needs of museums today, an overall picture of how documentation serves as the knowledge-base museums need to use successfully their collections will be described. Collections-based research is clearly a particularly pertinent issue within the museum sector at present and it must be revived as a core function in museums. Central to achieving this is a return to fundamental principles; ensuring that

basic documentation and cataloguing provides museums with a reliable and comprehensive record of their collections content. This paper will give focus to the requirement for appropriate vocabulary use within museums, allowing each collection to be described in an accessible and relevant way. As the first point of entry to collections, documentation records provide the framework for public access and serve as the foundation upon which knowledge builds. By being transparent about missing information, while at the same time pursuing new and developing in-house research policies, it will be argued that museums can strengthen their position as educative centres. The continuing worth and relevance of museum collections cannot be underestimated and it is the responsibility of collections management staff, working in partnership with curatorial staff, other museum professionals and end-users, to maintain and enrich documentation in order to sustain interest in collections and improve their wider usability. Ultimately, this paper will conclude that by treating associated documentation records as an integral part of museum collections, while at the same time providing increased opportunities for intellectual access, museums will successfully develop in their collective role as an invaluable resource for on-going academic research.

1. Documentation, computerisation and digitisation

Although subsequent chapters will explore in more depth many of the issues raised here, it is useful to consider first the various functions of a collections management department within the wider museum environment. The term museum, referring throughout this paper to both museums and art galleries, invites many interpretations, but central to most is the recognised responsibility of such an institution to a collection. Personal collections of curios, amassed by one person or a group of individuals to induce contemplation and study, are often now serving as the foundation of modern public museums, inviting ever-widening audiences to contemplate the objects that comprise the collections. As the perception of how museums best serve communities continues to evolve, the parameters of responsibility must alter too. What has not changed, however, is the root of the collection as a tool for learning and currently there is vast potential for collections management, through policy and action, to impact upon issues of intellectual access to objects. With the key responsibility of such a department being to record and document the movements of objects, together with each object's history as part of the museum collection, then the tools employed to manage successfully such information must be acknowledged as contributory factors in both successes and failures.

In recent years the concept of public ownership of museum collections has been actively promoted, in turn increasing the need for such institutions to be publicly accountable by justifying resources, in particular sustained funding. For a time, however, this desire for accountability has undermined some of the more publicly remote functions of a museum; academic scholarship being a primary example of this. Those institutions not protected by a 'national' label and the prestige automatically associated with this have had to identify other means by which to demonstrate public worth. In this context, access, outreach, social inclusion and lifelong learning, often referred to as popular 'buzzwords', have helped to describe the perceived priorities of today's public museums. Merely displaying objects, which people may choose to come and view, is no longer seen as a sufficient use of museum resources. Instead, institutions are now expected to actively pursue potential audiences, promoting the relevance of their collections to all sectors of the community. Interpretation is a key factor in achieving this. Making objects more accessible through dynamic displays built around inter-linking themes and ideas is considered more relevant to modern

museum visitors than traditional chronological displays. Active participation in projects is encouraged as members of the public are invited to assert their ownership of collections, thereby benefiting from collections' use and maximising any related learning potential.

> 'Everything that a museum does is ultimately for the public benefit. Understanding the public's interests and concerns, likes and dislikes, needs and wants, is of critical importance in providing successful museums and services. Museums are for people, and the successful museum recognises the opportunities which participation and involvement can bring to its work.' [4]

Before growing public demands on museum collections can be fully realised, however, there is an internal need for museums to account for the objects in their care: collections must be responsibly managed before they can be responsibly used to support learning and outreach projects. By prioritising the care of collections in the short-term a sustainable future for the collection will be secured and fundamental to achieving this is the maintenance of good object documentation and the provision of a usable collections database.

On 24 April 2002 the Scottish Parliament passed the Freedom of Information Act, affecting all public authorities, from schools and universities to the health service and police force. This act will also impact on museums when it comes into full force in 2005. 'It will introduce a general statutory right of access to all types of 'recorded' information of any age held by Scottish public authorities. Subject to certain conditions and exemptions, any person who makes a request to a public authority for information will be entitled to receive it.'[5] Essentially, the basic expectation of museums to create and disseminate information will be reinforced by a public right of access to make use of museum information resources. Inevitably, documentation records that account for collections content will be central to this, but access will also extend to include further resources such as object files that may not previously have been considered suitable for public perusal. In instances where information of a sensitive nature is recorded, each situation must be individually assessed to determine whether or not an exemption could apply; particularly relevant in cases where information might compromise security or personal privacy. Otherwise, public requests for information will have to be met to the best of each institution's capabilities. One of the key aims of the act is to encourage public institutions to be pro-active in their approach to sharing information and although there are areas in which some museums already provide excellent access to

[4] Timothy Ambrose, Crispin Paine, *Museum Basics*, London, New York, 2002, 17

information resources, notably in instances where public access systems permit remote searching of catalogue databases and collections content, plans for the continued improvement and enhancement of such systems must be made clear.

After a period of consultation that followed Scottish devolution in 1999, the Scottish Executive launched *Scotland's National Cultural Strategy: Creating Our Future ... Minding Our Past.* This document lists and defines the cultural priorities of the new Scottish Parliament, laying the foundation for potential improvements in all fields of Scottish culture. 'The strategy is a framework of action which will underpin the development of Scotland's cultural life over the next 4 years. It is driven by the Executive's vision of Scotland, confident in its cultural identity and its contribution in the 21st century, but proud and knowledgeable of its heritage. '[6] In this strategy document the Scottish Executive explored the many facets of Scottish culture, acknowledging the necessity to preserve and support arts and heritage in a newly devolved Scotland. Part of this commitment was recently realised when the new Scottish Parliament called for a national audit of all museum collections to be held. Carried out by the Scottish Museums Council (SMC), the major impact of this exercise was *The National Audit: A Collective Insight*[7]. This report recognised what is now accepted as a 'distributed national collection'[8] of objects, deemed to be both nationally and internationally important, in Scottish collections. In short, the definition of Scotland's national collection is no longer considered to be solely those objects held in the collections of Scotland's national museums and galleries, but instead encompasses objects in all collections throughout Scotland.

In England a scheme of designated collections has already been introduced whereby collections considered to be of national importance, outwith the national institutions, are officially recognised and are eligible for additional funding to support their use, maximising their associated worth. A step in the right direction, this project was then followed by a report compiled by Resource, the Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives[9], that investigated the current state of

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[5] Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, www.scotland.gov.uk/government/foi/foioverview.pdf
[6] Scottish Executive, *Scotland's National Cultural Strategy: Creating Our Future . . . Minding Our Past*, www.scotland.gov.uk/nationalculturalstrategy
[7] Scottish Museums Council, *The National Audit: A Collective Insight*, Edinburgh, 2002
[8] ibid
[9] *Re*:source, now the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

regional museums in England. *Renaissance in the Regions: A New Vision for England's Museums*[10] published findings similar to those highlighted by Scotland's audit, but, unlike *Renaissance in the Regions*, the Scottish report made no clearly defined recommendations as to how the museum service in Scotland might be improved, instead highlighting areas in particular need of attention and indicating where Executive priorities should lie. In response, the Scottish Executive promised to consult with the museum sector and produce a framework for action that would define the role of museums in Scotland, shaping management and service priorities.

Published in August 2003 *An Action Framework for Museums: Consultation and Response* contains the Scottish Executive's recommendations for solving, in the short-term, some of the many issues raised by museum professionals during the consultation period. Reaction to this report, however, has largely been disappointment, particularly as the SMC published a leaflet in April 2003 entitled *Ten priorities for a new parliament: the future of the past*[11], detailing what they perceived to be the priorities of the new Scottish Parliament for improving leadership and practice throughout the museum service. Subsequently, in their response to the Executive's action framework, the SMC were quick to highlight the fact that there was a failure to address key issues, such as sustainable funding, investment and the implementation of governable standards and improved stewardship of collections in their report. The national audit had clearly demonstrated insufficient resources tackling fundamental museum responsibilities, including documentation, and in response to this the SMC had called for a national framework that would describe how museums could effectively develop their cultural role in Scotland.

> 'A key objective of the Action Plan for museums should be to develop effective strategic and advisory structures, which are appropriate to modern Scotland. A new national framework for museums should clearly identify the respective roles of the Scottish Executive, National Museums and Galleries, local authorities, SMC and Historic Scotland. Principles of transparency, stakeholder input and accountability should underpin the framework. '[12]

By not directly dealing with such key issues, the Executive undermines its ability to achieve its wider aims of improving cultural service. 'Stewardship' collectively refers to conservation, documentation, management and interpretation of collections. By neglecting or compromising any of these principles, a museum is failing in its responsibility to preserve and care for its collection.

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[10] *Re*:source, *Renaissance in the Regions: A New Vision for England's Museums*, 2001
[11] Scottish Museums Council, *Ten priorities for a new parliament: The future of the past*, Edinburgh, 2003

Although the Executive acknowledged that its *Action Framework* dealt only with short-term goals, achievable within existing resource constraints, stewardship should be recognised as a central priority: it is an issue that impacts on every museum service. Despite the fact that it has not been addressed comprehensively by the Scottish Executive, an awareness that documentation backlogs were preventing the full potential of collections from being realised did bring documentation back to the forefront of concerns relating to effective museum management.

> 'A key priority should be the reduction of Scotland's massive documentation backlog, through the development and implementation by SMC of a national documentation strategy. It should be complemented by regional and national collections policies, which adopt a strategic approach to the gaps and strengths in the distributed national collection.'[13]

While attempts to resolve this situation are on-going and pressure on the Scottish Executive to support the development of much needed guidelines increases, it is important to recognise that this is not a new or recent problem.

The need for museums to document and record the objects that enter and leave their collections is long established and, in recent years, has been frequently reiterated by many people on a number of occasions. Concerns similar to those raised by *The National Audit* and *Renaissance in the Regions* were also brought to public attention in 1973 when the findings of the Wright Report into the state of provincial museums and galleries were published[14]. This report acknowledged the role played by documentation in helping museums to communicate information about their collections to visitors, stressing the need for comprehensive and reliable systems that would play a key role in information management. Following this report, many museums called for clearer guidelines to help them come to terms with the growing importance being placed on collections management. Traditionally, key curatorial responsibilities had focused on research and preservation, outweighing the more political or commercial issues of management. As the pressure of accountability increased, museums were forced to embrace their nature as public

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[12] ibid

[13] Scottish Museums Council, *Executive Summary: From National Audit to National Framework*, www.scottishmuseums.org.uk

[14] C. W. Wright (chairman), Department of Education and Science, *Provincial museums and galleries: a report of a committee appointed by the Paymaster General*, London, 1973, as cited in D. Andrew Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, The Museum Documentation Association, Cambridge, 1985, 1

institutions. A more consumer-conscious public wanted to see how and where money was spent and museums were forced to justify their role in society. To do this effectively they needed to strengthen their existing position and increase confidence by building a museum service on a foundation of collections-based knowledge.

Comprehensive improvements to museum documentation clearly did not occur immediately and it has been suggested that the problem was compounded, rather than improved, by the introduction of computers to the workplace.[15] A resource that would ultimately revolutionise collections management, computers initially caused more trouble by presenting the hope of a fully-formed solution to the problem of incomplete and badly administered collections databases. The promise of a system that would manipulate data electronically induced many museums to adopt computerisation of collections databases before existing paper-based systems were refined and updated. Although it is inconceivable to imagine the absence of computers in the workplace today, there is still an understanding that in order for a task to be performed efficiently by a computer, it must be given efficient instruction by the user. Working with the inputted information, the computer will respond to the best of its programmed capabilities. If insufficient or inaccurate information is fed into a system, that same information will be the only source that the computer has to formulate a response. It was recognised eventually that a return to basics was needed if computerised databases adopted by museums were to be functional and usable; there had to be a guarantee that the information entering the system was of excellent quality so that the long-term relevance of content was assured[16].

Acquiring knowledge about collections has never been a problem within museums. Although recently an inclination within some institutions to suppress scholarship has been acknowledged, many museum professionals with responsibility for a collection maintain a vested personal interest in the objects in their care and the desire to learn from them and about them is instinctive. Over many years curators working with collections have gathered huge amounts of knowledge about objects, undertaking a degree of collections-based research that has declined so

[15] Lenore Sarasan, 'Why museum computer projects fail' in Anne Fahy, *Collections Management*, London, 1995, 195

[16] Paul E. Rivard and Steven Miller, 'Cataloguing collections – erratic starts and eventual success: a case study' in Anne Fahy (ed), *Collections Management*, London, 214

drastically in many of today's museums that it has only recently been redefined as a core curatorial responsibility. While it is unanimously agreed that museums can only benefit from increased collections knowledge, it must also be recognised that such knowledge is only useful if it is made accessible. Where modern curators have learned from their predecessors' mistakes is in identifying the need to record and document research so that it remains a learning resource for future museum users. When curators who had become experts in their fields retired from active museum work, they took with them a career's worth of expertise and vital collections information, due mainly to the fact that no system was in place to gather and store their experience or knowledge. Information must now be rediscovered to compensate for this loss, exposing a past inefficient use of resources and highlighting a present day need to implement information gathering systems that will prevent a similar situation occurring again.

> 'In many museums, information about the collection was maintained through the collective memory of curators and support staff rather than the [information] files. Without oral tradition, many collection information systems would have failed even to fulfil the two basic functions of museum documentation – to lead the user to the specimen in a reasonable period of time, and to inter-relate all the information sources so that a user might easily find all the information recorded about a particular object. '[17]

Since its inception in 1978, the Museum Documentation Association (mda) has come to be a focal organisation in the museum sector, developing the guidelines necessary for successful and comprehensive documentation of collections. Consistently responding to the needs of museums struggling with the responsibility of documenting their collections, often retrospectively, the mda has developed many tools and resources to support successful implementation of information management systems. The approach of the mda is fundamental; by knowing what is contained in a museum collection the institution can then use this information to advance status, increase funding and improve service. Physically locating and using objects becomes infinitely easier if the storage locations are already known and have been recorded, freeing the potential of collections as a usable material resource. Further to this, in order for a museum to participate in the Registration scheme, operated by the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and administered in Scotland by the SMC, institutions must demonstrate acceptable standards of good practice, documentation of collections being a key issue.

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[17] Lenore Sarasan, 'Why museum computer projects fail' in Anne Fahy (ed), *Collections Management*, London, 1995, 187

While not compulsory, Registration is encouraged within the sector, ultimately benefiting participating museums through increased funding opportunities, encouraging skills-sharing and, most importantly, establishing good and therefore accountable practice. The mda's role in supporting the primary aim of Registration 'to encourage all museums and galleries to achieve agreed minimum standards in collection care, museum management and public services'[18] is significant. Collections care is again given prominence as a priority for all museums and documentation is inevitably central to this. Through its website the mda provides the museum sector with an information portal that gives access to extensive and usable information that encourages improved documentation, reinforcing the guidelines already published by the mda in *SPECTRUM: the UK Museum Documentation Standard*[19]. This resource has been accepted throughout the museums sector as being representative of its needs if good documentation is to be achieved, reflecting the consultation process that played a major role in researching and writing the final *SPECTRUM* guidelines. It describes minimum standards for each stage of the cataloguing process, from object entry and description to disposal and relevant legal issues. There is also information for museums implementing a retrospective programme of documentation, an activity essential to those institutions suffering from past bad practice but keen to benefit from Registered museum status.

The way that museums approach documentation of their collections has evolved and continues to respond to an improved understanding of collections care, together with the development of new technologies able to manipulate and manage the large amounts of data inevitably gathered by museums as they amass information about their collections. Traditionally, many institutions would have relied on an acquisition register as the primary point of reference for objects entering their collections and in many instances such records continue to play a key collections management role. Beyond this, the plausible development of a documentation system from paper-based to computerisation would most likely have begun with the use of catalogue cards, one for each object, giving the basic information describing the object and including details of acquisition. The usability of such resources was dependent, however, on how specific information

[18] http://www.scottishmuseums.org.uk/members_services/documentation.asp
[19] Jeff Cowton (ed), *SPECTRUM: the UK Museums Documentation Standard 2nd edition*, 1997, Cambridge

might be extracted from records quickly and efficiently, without having to check each individual catalogue card. The answer to this was the implementation of indexing systems that allowed users to retrieve information from the museum catalogue by considering the most commonly requested information, such as storage location, and making provision for cross-referencing capabilities. Using this paper-based information as the framework for computerised databases, however, still relied on the manual inputting of information. As with handwritten or typed records new computer records remained vulnerable to human error, perhaps more so as information retrieval in computer records depends on many more minute details, such as the use of capital letters, consistently recording artist names and a general uniformity of data entry. The potential for records to be effectively 'lost' from an information retrieval search due to a typographical error is far greater than in performing the same search through a manual system and this is an ongoing issue that museums must overcome in order to create usable and reliable information management systems. Such databases became the forerunners to the collections management systems that are now widely used in the museum sector today.

When computerisation of collections information was first adopted the necessary technology was still very much in a developmental period. With no accepted standard or format for computerised catalogue systems it was up to individual institutions to choose whether or not to pursue the computerisation of catalogue records. On a practical management level, computer use in the workplace was not an issue that had previously held much relevance within museums. While administrative uses and, in particular, word processing spread rapidly, there remained much ignorance about what a computer could potentially do. Belief that this new technology could revolutionise information and collections management was not mistaken: the difficulty was not only in recognising the capabilities of computers in a museum environment, but more in exploiting them fully. Further to this, making a computerised database work did not mean abandoning the existing catalogue records. Limited staffing that had prevented or impeded the comprehensive documentation of a collection before the proposed use of computers would continue to affect an electronic documentation programme, undermining the reliability of the database. This problem, far from being resolved in the early stages of computer use in museums, continues to affect the computerised records of many institutions. Despite the introduction of increasingly sophisticated computer technologies a large proportion of public museums in the UK are still struggling to revise

and edit basic catalogue information; that is, the fundamental facts that describe a museum collection, transforming it into a usable and vital learning resource.

Before discussing their wider impact on collections management in museums, it is useful to consider the evolution of the collections management system (CMS). Supporting every CMS there is an underlying database. Following on from paper-based documentation systems that relied on catalogue cards and manual indexing, early computerised collections databases were essentially electronic versions of this same information. Constructed using a series of 'fields', each containing a specific type of information, databases allow data to be accessed and retrieved in response to search queries. 'Traditional databases are made up of fields, records and files. A field is a single piece of information such as the accession number or object name. A record is a collection of fields which will document a single object. A file is a collection of records e.g. a Fine Art database.'[20] Simple searches of database content can be carried out by using as a query the same term that describes a data field, extracting from the database that information only. Many types of databases exist, each structured to organise information in different ways. Distinctions between each type of database are, however, becoming less defined as computer technology continues to advance. As databases become more sophisticated the links between data fields become more complex and, at its most expansive, a Free Text Database will recognise all words as potential search terms, applying queries across the entire data content.[21]

As information technology developed, the potential to increase the usability of computerised collections databases was recognised, encompassing far more than basic cataloguing. Databases could be linked and cross searching of expanded content became possible. More effective management and subsequent manipulation of this information means that a comprehensive CMS builds on the underlying database, using it to support more sophisticated computer programmes: this is where the CMS visibly expands on the function of a database. While basic catalogue information is stored in the database, the CMS is able to manage and manipulate this information, using it as a framework for decision-making and the control of collections-based activities. Instilling worth in any CMS, however, remains the responsibility of

[20] David Dawson and Gordon McKenna, 'mda Survey of Information Technology in Museums 1998' in *mda Information vol 4 no 1*, www.mda.org.uk
[21] ibid

museum staff. Accession registers, catalogue cards, object files and any other manual system used to record and describe information on museum objects must still be maintained as a valuable resource for research and as far as possible, any object information available should be included in the catalogue database that supports the CMS.

Data entry must be recognised by museums as an opportunity to re-evaluate the current state of documentation, potentially creating a usable resource out of a confused amalgamation of existing paper-based records. While physical access to objects might be limited by exhibition space or a lack of open storage provision, intellectual access to museum collections should be made possible through the CMS. Astute use of such systems has already helped to propel some museums from the computer age into the digital age, giving them global presence and allowing them to market both the collection and the institution on a worldwide stage. As so many different responses to the challenge of computerisation were developed, it is not possible within the parameters of this paper to provide an exhaustive account of every CMS currently available to the sector. Further to this, the central discussion is not how museums choose to document their collections, but rather why documentation is a fundamental responsibility of museums, underpinning increased collections-based knowledge and successful management. By briefly referring, however, to two examples of a CMS it is possible to give context to this particular collections management resource.

Although museums were willing to employ information technology (IT) principles to support object catalogues as soon as was possible, advice on how best to implement computerised systems often had to be sought externally, from people who were not museum professionals. Many in-house computer databases were created by individual institutions before generic programmes were developed with the specific intent of serving the needs of the museum community. The mda, again leading the field in promoting best practice in museum documentation, launched MODES in 1987. Described as a 'data entry and retrieval cataloguing system'[22], MODES has been systematically upgraded over the years to improve its usability. Applying the *SPECTRUM* standards of data entry, MODES allows its users to enter all necessary collections management information relating to an object, including essential descriptive information as well as

[22] http://www.mda.org.uk/info

conservation records and storage locations. Retrieving, sorting and filtering information is within the capabilities of MODES and it is possible to create subsets of records, grouping together entries described by a common factor. What MODES cannot do is inter-relate its database with further collections management information, associated media or expanded cultural content, although it is possible to attach further information to existing records. Its focus is very much object orientated, structured on the mda data standard that includes over 150 fields, sub-divided as either primary, group or common. While field lists and terminology can be customised to serve the specific needs of any one institution, the information fed into the system will consistently be supported by the *SPECTRUM* guidelines on which the data entry procedures are built.

In comparison Multi MIMSY 2000[23] claims its main strength is the continuing development of object-focused cataloguing, moving beyond merely storing and retrieving data. Instead, Multi MIMSY aims to establish a foundation of searchable, inter-linked collections-based knowledge within each institution it serves. Where before each museum department might have stored any information it created, such as photography, conservation reports or object labels in either a paper-based archive system, or in an isolated computer programme, Multi MIMSY is able to gather this information together in a comprehensive, inter-linked CMS. Using 'Knowledge Authorities'[24] that describe objects in context, but can be linked to further relevant files and references, Multi MIMSY creates the foundation for a system that serves equal purpose as a research tool, while still performing necessary information management tasks. All information content created about objects in the collection is catalogued according to its own definition, whether by people, place or subject and in turn these separate fields, or Knowledge Authorities, are linked together to create a network of information about any one object.

> 'The Knowledge Authorities provide an interconnected, intellectual context in which the object or specimen is framed and through which it may be interpreted . . . For museum materials to be of interest to and be used effectively by a wider audience, this context is essential . . . The Knowledge Authorities are the first step in transforming museum automation systems from object-centric, single department systems to knowledge navigation of wide appeal and applicability. '[25]

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[23] Multi MIMSY 2000 has been selected as an example of good practice, for the purpose of this paper, based on the fact that it is the chosen collections management system of two of the institutions under discussion. Please be aware that there are a number of alternative collections management systems currently available to the museum sector, each performing similar tasks efficiently and effectively.

[24] www.willo.com/mimsy/

[25] Lenore Sarasan, *What makes Multi MIMSY 2000 so different?* Willoughby Press, 1997

The idea of knowledge navigation and the creation of intellectual context are clearly two particular strengths of Multi MIMSY and are further supported by the concepts of 'Recyclable Resources'[26] and 'Simultaneous Structure'[27].

Recyclable Resources refers to museum activities such as exhibitions, scholarly research and other interpretative exercises that result in the creation of information. In order to correct the long-established failing whereby information about collections was lost, this knowledge would be consistently fed into Multi MIMSY and would be used to enhance and improve existing catalogue information, thus strengthening context. In essence, any project undertaken by museum staff that created new information about the collection would be used to support the knowledge base of the CMS. Rather than serving only its original purpose and becoming lost to future users, the CMS will preserve new information as part of the museum's wider collection of object-based knowledge.

In turn, Simultaneous Structure allows users to search more effectively by applying the same search query to all parts of a collection, returning all the available related results. This search facility allows information about dissimilar objects to be compared, revealing links that may not otherwise have been realised. For example, rather than searching separately for all objects with a reference to Roman Gods in Fine Art, Numismatics or Decorative Art, one search query could be applied across all disparate elements of the collection. Similarly, a researcher looking for depictions of, or references to, a particular place during a particular period could collectively search all areas of the collection, bringing together a group of objects whose relationship to one another may not otherwise have been considered.

Undoubtedly, using Multi MIMSY to manage collections and information about collections in a museum environment has the potential to revolutionise how collections are used. If the quality and accuracy of underlying basic documentation can be guaranteed, then the system would be able to move away from fundamental cataloguing concerns, using new technology to exploit the learning and research potential of collections. In turn, this would encourage intellectual access and improve collections-based knowledge, together with the subsequent dissemination of information.

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[26] www.willo.com/mimsy/
[27] ibid

> 'By designing a different kind of museum automation system – one that supports fast access to every aspect of an item, connects it with supplementary information, and enables everything to be combined, correlated, and collated across physically diverse collections – we will open up the access and use of museum materials. This kind of user-orientation and unprecedented access can change the pathways of humanities research and the patterns of scientific enquiry. '[28]

Removing sole use of the CMS from the museum environment and allowing public access to the information it contains is the next step in securing new avenues for the promotion of collections as a scholarly resource. Digitising collections and making them available on-line will not only achieve this but will immediately alter the visitor-profile of a museum, adding local, national and international virtual visitors to its audience base. Digital technology has once again revolutionised the potential represented by computers. Museums who have taken the opportunity to digitise their existing collections documentation records have created invaluable resources that support and encourage greater use of collections in scholarship and research.

Reflecting the political priorities and vision of the current government, museums are now expected to play their part in creating and sustaining a learning society. As repositories for objects and artefacts that describe and represent culture, museums are responsible for celebrating the past and demonstrating how the future relates to historic innovation. Although collections were always considered primarily to be an educative tool, the number of people benefiting from their use was limited by issues of insufficient access and poor management. In recent years education has become a core political priority and petition for the demonstrative use of collections in support of learning has increased greatly. As political expectations of how museums could better serve education policies are expressed and as digitisation becomes an ever more prominent issue, it is useful to consider further how museums can improve public access not only to their collections, but also to their information archives.

Using new digital technology in museums focuses on making information about collections available on-line, via the internet. As modern museum audiences become more demanding, museums must diversify in their approach to interpreting and displaying collections. Traditionally, physically visiting objects has been the main point of entry to museums, but use of ever more sophisticated information and communication technology (ICT) has added a virtual dimension to

[28] Sarasan, *What makes Multi MIMSY 2000 so different?*

exhibition spaces. The key difference between earlier use of IT in museums and the current acceptance of ICT is the communication factor: by digitising information it becomes easier to copy, manipulate and distribute data. In the same way that computers have become a vital factor of everyday life in museums new and developing ICT must now be incorporated. Museums, together with many other public institutions, are now expected to have an on-line presence. Use of the internet in schools, universities and for home-learning has become so fundamental that the public assumes existence of web-sites and while the majority of museums now provide some internet resources, the pressure still exists to enhance and improve this provision. Central to this is increasing access to information. In a virtual setting the key strength of the museum collection is its information content: facts and descriptions relating to and derived from each object, relevant to but detached from the object itself.

By making available on-line the information that places an object in context within the wider collection, the museum is able to compensate partially for the absence of the physical object. The first point of reference for such information is inevitably the collections database; relying once more on documentation to serve as the foundation for the implementation of new technology, museums are able to profit from an existing resource. Such profit will generally not be realised in monetary terms, but rather in renewed and increased interest in the museum collection and the successful dissemination of that information. Where before computers served museums as a tool in information management, they are now playing a much greater role in distributing information outwith the institution, fulfilling the responsibility of museums to use collections in support of learning. This can only be possible, however, if the content upon which such information systems are based is reliable. In a recent paper Fiona Cameron referred to the issue of data quality as a limiting factor in allowing on-line access to collections information.[29] Her interest in the theoretical questions surrounding such access focused largely on the evolution of fundamental documentation from database content into 'effective and sustainable 'knowledge environments' '[30]. It must be recognised, however, that Cameron's ideal of creating 'knowledge environments' on-line by using existing collections information cannot be realised until data quality is of a standard capable of supporting such comprehensive access. Without the appropriate framework of documented

[29] Fiona Cameron, *The next generation – 'Knowledge Environments' and digital collections*, Museums and the Web 2003, www.archimuse.com/mw2003/papers/cameron
[30] ibid, 7

knowledge, the theory of unimpeded digital access cannot be realised. As with earlier instances when computer technology was introduced before paper-based collections databases had been edited appropriately, there is a risk that the desire to adopt digital technology may compromise data content. Museums must take pride in content to ensure provision of a reliable resource and in many cases this has prevented institutions from allowing full access to their collections databases.

If the state of a museum collections database is deemed to be of an acceptable standard, turning this information into an on-line public access system is now, more than ever, a relatively simple step. Those companies or organisations that provide bespoke systems for collections management often also provide compatible web-interfaces that are capable of using this information as the framework for a digital resource. On-line, remote searching of collections then becomes a public privilege, realising further learning potential and inviting increased access to museum collections. MODES and Multi MIMSY both have such provision, but financial pressure and limitation can sometimes lead to reluctance in institutions to exploit this capability. The expense of introducing the web-interface is compounded by the need for extensive editing and preparation of information content. As it may not be possible for an institution to dedicate staff to such a responsibility, the decision must be made whether or not to pursue such projects. Where appropriate funding can be secured, however, the end result can be impressive.

As an example of good practice, Tate Online has been a hugely successful digital asset to the Tate galleries, comprising Tate Britain, Tate Modern, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives. Sponsored by BT, this award-winning site offers a collections search facility covering over 65,000 works in the combined collections. Beyond this, the website includes virtual exhibition space, interactive learning tools as well as extensive information on current Tate projects, research and exhibitions. Well managed and designed, the Tate website has achieved the ideal of digital access to both its collections and museum service. 'One of the UK's most influential arts organisations, Tate considers its website to be its fifth gallery and uses it as a vital tool in its mission to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of art.'[31] In terms of supporting intellectual access, a simple search by artist name returns records that are accompanied by a digital image,

[31] David Prudames, *Tate Online wins BAFTA award for UK's best factual website*, www.24hourmuseum.org.uk, 2004

basic catalogue information and a short description. In addition to this, it is possible to discover whether or not the work is on display, where it is currently being displayed and whether it is in storage. Also, a larger image of the work can be called up. A subject tree to illustrate how the work has been described in the collections database suggests possible cross-searches of the collection, detailing the number of works that fall into each particular subject field.

As a research tool, such comprehensive well-managed access is invaluable. Scholars interested in a particular artist, period, subject or styles, who wish to determine whether or not potentially relevant works are held in the Tate collections, can do this remotely, receiving an immediate and accurate response. Usability of the collection is vastly enhanced, reflecting positively on the institution and its reputation through the demonstration of excellent collections-based knowledge underpinning access. The ability to sustain funding and sponsorship is also virtually guaranteed as digital audiences continue to grow and association with such an influential organisation can only be beneficial. Although immediately achieving the standard set by Tate would be an unrealistic goal for most galleries, what can be learnt from the Tate example is the need for confidence in collections-based knowledge before it is made public. Tate's success is dependent on exemplary database content, reflecting successful collections management, excellent documentation and extensive knowledge resulting from continuing in-house collections-based research.

In June 1999 the National Museum Directors' Conference (NMDC) published *A Netful of Jewels: New Museums in the Learning Age*[32]. Focusing on the collective development of digital media, growth in cultural industries and the promotion of continuing education this report addressed the issue of information content and other relevant factors in the successful digitisation of cultural resources. The report's primary assertion, however, was that museums were particularly well placed to utilise and benefit from digital technology in order to contribute to lifelong learning by disseminating collections information. 'The digital assets of museums already represent a valuable and growing national resource that needs to be managed and securely maintained. Museums will need to preserve their basic digital collections. These will be stored in

[32] National Museum Directors' Conference, *A Netful of Jewels: New Museums in the Learning Age*, www.nationalmuseums.org.uk, 1999

multimedia repositories, related to museum collections management systems. '[33] From this it is apparent that the need to preserve and maintain documentation records in museums has now extended to encompass the need to sustain new digital collections and projects. While museums expand their use of digital technology to manage information and distribute content they must also make a commitment to the continued enhancement of such content. This can be achieved only through on-going, collections-based research. While digitisation cannot be ignored as an essential tool in improving museum management and public service, the physical collections at the heart of museums remain their primary responsibility. All museum activities must be founded on an understanding and appreciation of the collection.

The capacity for museum collections to describe and define culture has previously been mentioned and with a growing consumer desire for unrestricted access, making collections databases available on-line is an established ICT priority in the museum sector. The policy objectives of the Scottish Parliament reflect this, responding to the advocated potential for museums to reach more people through the application of ICT, as outlined in *A Netful of Jewels.* 'People can make sense of their cultural identities through museums. Through them, people are encouraged to find the links and the relationships between different cultures, and can express and celebrate diversity and connections alike. The internet richly enhances this potential. '[34] Detailed in Scotland's *National Cultural Strategy* as one of the actions necessary in order to successfully 'conserve, present and promote interest in and knowledge of Scotland's history and cultural heritage'[35] access to collections information through the application of ICT was prioritised. Further to this, when considering the wider aims of the cultural strategy, the Scottish Executive was also keen to highlight the potential of developing ICT skills as an essential framework for a 'learning culture'[36], thereby furthering its political priority of promoting lifelong learning in communities throughout Scotland. By returning, however, to the Executive's *Action Framework* for Museums attention is again drawn to the Executive's apparent failure to address ICT realistically. While the SMC had hoped that a commitment to ICT development would be an outlined priority, maintaining

[33] ibid, 15
[34] ibid, 7
[35] Scottish Executive, *Scotland's National Cultural Strategy*, 8
[36] ibid

that 'investment in ICT could transform collections management'[37], the Executive neglected to describe any plans for the consistent application of ICT across the museum sector. Although ICT has been recognised and must inevitably be accepted as an indispensable management and education tool in museums, a lack of centrally defined parameters invites the risk of badly administered systems serving as stop-gap solutions to sustainable digital access.

In its consultation response to the Scottish Executive's plans for an action framework for museums, the MLA clearly described the museum sector's position regarding the implementation of ICT.

> 'We believe that ICT will play an increasingly important role in the development of the museums, archives and libraries sector, supporting greater access to collections and services by more users and creating new learning opportunities relevant to people of all ages and backgrounds. In order to fulfil this potential, it is essential that a co-ordinated approach to ICT is undertaken, built on a commitment to established standards that operate across the museums, archive and libraries sector . . . Adopting an integrated approach to ICT at this stage will better enable the sector in Scotland to exploit opportunities in the future. '[38]

There is no doubt that the potential of ICT to serve the educative goals of museums efficiently is vast, but unless projects are managed by professionals, within a framework designed to deliver optimum service, then this potential cannot be maximised. However, it is unfair to imply that the successful implementation of ICT projects is currently impossible. Despite museum sector disappointment in the direct tackling of ICT issues, the Scottish Executive has committed to the continuing development of a national on-line resource that serves as an information portal for access to collections information from diverse sources.

A Millennium Project, SCRAN, the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network is without doubt a valuable digital asset in the museum sector and is a working example of ICT being used as a tool for learning. Gathering together digitised information from various resources throughout Scotland, including museums, libraries and archives, SCRAN allows users to cross-search text, photography, film clips and sound archives, bringing up all entries relevant to individual search criteria. Funded projects to encourage participation in SCRAN have enabled many institutions in

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[37] Scottish Museums Council, *Ten priorities for a new parliament*

[38] *Re*:source, the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, *Resource Consultation Response: Scotland's Museums and Galleries – an Action Plan*, December 2002, 8

Scotland to commence digitisation of parts of their collections for inclusion on the database, but this is not the same as allowing comprehensive access to collections databases. Also, the perceived user-base for SCRAN is largely considered to be school groups and there is a definite bias towards serving the needs of the 5-14 Scottish curriculum. Its role as an information portal, however, does promote use of SCRAN as a starting point for wider academic research. While comprehensive on-line access to collections databases remains in its developmental stages, being able to perform broad searches of inter-linked data on SCRAN could in turn suggest additional information sources, encouraging scholars to approach museums directly, thus increasing collections-based research.

In addition to drawing attention to collections content, SCRAN has also proved its worth by directly impacting upon documentation in museums. Participation in SCRAN projects requires information to be edited and presented to specific standards; if this information can then be fed back into the collections management database used by the museum it serves to enhance collections knowledge, underpinning its usability as a resource for learning. By ensuring that information is used and stored responsibly, museums continue to develop their role as research centres. This again relates to the idea of successful collections digitisation depending on information content, rather than the physical presence of objects. 'Knowledge bases can be permanently stored and added to, and from them information can be reassembled and retrieved in ever more sophisticated ways. This could once have been a rather odd description of the mind of a scholarly and knowledgeable curator. '[39] Although this description captures the image of collections management systems as sophisticated information resources, capable of manipulating and managing the data they comprise, the physical presence of the collection, underpinning research and knowledge, should not be forgotten. Similarly, although a database functions as the repository for collections information, it does not create this information. While it may be able to inter-relate data, responding efficiently to search queries, the core of any such system, whether a simple computer programme working within a collections database, a collections management system or a digitised public access system the available information is always rooted in the manual documentation of the collection. Curatorial responsibility for continuing to research and learn about objects in their care is what makes digital information resources viable.

[39] Suzanne Keene, *Digital Collections: Museums and the Information Age*, Oxford, 1998, 3

Digital technology is continuing to evolve rapidly and projects to maximise its potential are ongoing. In January 2002 the European Commission Directorate-General for the Information Society published the *DigiCULT Report*[40]. This paper explored the many issues being faced by the wider cultural sector in digitising cultural content and brought together the research findings of numerous parties with a vested interest in the development of ICT within cultural organisations and institutions. 'As 'guardians' of our rich cultural heritage and therefore potential providers of digital content, cultural heritage institutions are considered an important factor in the knowledge society, and the key to a treasure chest of cultural resources that is simply waiting to be opened and used.'[41] Covering in detail the contributory factors in achieving comprehensive digitisation of cultural resources, *DigiCULT* addressed not only the digitisation of museum collections to allow for public access, but also explored the idea of the virtual museum. The potential for digital communication to transform how museums and collections are accessed and used by the public is immeasurable, with ICT progress often seeming immediate, rather than developmental. In order to avoid losing focus in the consideration of such untapped potential, however, it is important to reassert the aim of this paper. That is, to demonstrate how improving documentation as an essential responsibility of collections management can increase intellectual access to collections. Clearly digitisation cannot be ignored as a pivotal factor in supporting the wider dissemination of information about collections, but bypassing fundamental collections access in pursuit of creating a virtual museum experience undermines rather than validates its use. In the same way that basic but accurate documentation facilitates accountable use of a collection, the provision of reliable digital access to collections databases guarantees a relevant and usable resource, rather than merely allowing partial access to incomplete content.

[40] European Commission Directorate-General for the Information Society, *The DigiCULT Report: Technological landscapes for tomorrow's cultural economy, unlocking the value of cultural heritage*, European Communities, 2002
[41] ibid, 33

2. The National Inventory Research Project

Already underway, the National Inventory Research Project (NIRP) is proactively addressing many issues relevant to this paper. The initial motivation behind this project was the Royal Academy of Arts exhibition *Art Treasures of England: the Regional Collections*[42]. This exhibition brought to light the number of works of national and international importance held in regional collections throughout England, while also revealing a lack of related knowledge in terms of scholarly research: as a result, the need to increase public awareness of such notable collections was recognised. Budget restrictions, however, and the consequential limitations on regional museum staff meant that research was not considered to be a spending priority. In many cases funding was merely ensuring that the day to day running of the museum remained viable but, by establishing the need for change, museum professionals opened the debate on how best practice in all areas of museum management might be achieved.

In December 2000 the Royal Academy gave focus to these initial concerns by hosting a seminar, the purpose of which was to discuss openly the various issues being faced by regional museums and galleries. Ultimately, this debate became the central theme of the *Renaissance in the Regions* report of 2001. Giving shape to many of the concerns raised by the 1998 Royal Academy exhibition and the subsequent seminar, this paper officially recognised the need for reform in the museum sector in England and its early preparation ran concurrently with the preliminary feasibility studies for the NIRP. It is relevant, therefore, to consider how *Renaissance in the Regions* informed the aims of the inventory project and how, in turn, the NIRP fulfils some of the recommendations made by the report. The original remit of the NIRP encompassed only England and Wales, due to the national audit being carried out by the SMC in Scotland at that time. Upon publication, however, of *The National Audit* in 2002, it was apparent that needs similar to those identified in England and Wales also existed in Scotland, with the result that the project was expanded to include collections throughout the UK.

[42] London, *Art Treasures of England: the Regional Collections*, Royal Academy of Arts, 22 January-13 April, 1998

Recommendations made by *Renaissance in the Regions* and *The National Audit*, in both England and Scotland respectively, impacted on all aspects of museum management. The main goal was to promote best practice and make the concept of the 21st-century museum a reality. Key to the findings in both reports was a lack of necessary funding to modernise and sustain museums: while national institutions continued to benefit from central government funding, regional museums were reliant on local funding that was often insufficient and inconsistent. 'The National Audit has long been seen by the museum sector as a first step towards a coherent national funding policy framework for museums in a devolved Scotland. The rationale has been that only when we know what we have, both in terms of collections and services, can we build on strengths and identify areas for improvement. '[43] There was a clear belief in both England and Scotland that building on the strength of knowledge was a fundamental principle in achieving an improved museum service. In order to tackle the perceived crisis most effectively it would be necessary to recognise the strength of non-national collections in contributing to national identity and cultural heritage, rectifying the inherent funding imbalance in order to begin the process of solving the problems in the UK's under-funded and understaffed museums. 'England has some of the finest museums in the world, but a spiralling pattern of neglect and decay, progressive financial pressures and changing priorities has left many struggling to survive. '[44] Of these changing priorities it was the on-going neglect of collections research which validated the calls for a database such as the NIRP.

Prepared by a Task Force of eminent museum professionals, *Renaissance in the Regions* described the state of research in museums as 'a serious scholarship crisis'[45]. In acknowledging how such a situation of neglected research had arisen, the report once more referred to the preconceived idea of curatorial research as an indulgent and self-interested use of public monies. The danger of continuing such thinking was, however, outlined in plain terms.

> 'Scholarship is not an ivory-tower luxury: it is the combination of knowledge and communication which underpins everything that a museum and gallery does. It is only by maintaining a high level of scholarship that museums and galleries can be authoritative –

[43] Scottish Museums Council, *A Collective Focus: Scotland's National Audit Summary Report*, Edinburgh, 2002, 2

[44] Museums Association, 'Regional Museums Task Force Report Renaissance in the Regions: A New Vision for England's Museums', *Museums Briefing: Essential Information for Members*, issue 25, October 2001, 1

[45] *Re*:source, *Renaissance in the Regions*, 19

> as the public rightly expects them to be. . . The weakening of scholarship means that the potential for learning, education and inclusion is significantly impaired. '[46]

In serving as a platform for on-going collections research the NIRP will not only compile a comprehensive list of works held in regional collections but will also combine current ICT with core collections data. This is an issue that *Renaissance in the Regions* emphatically supports, acknowledging that computerised collections databases or management systems not only help decision making on a general level but also support public access. Providing an on-line searchable database vastly increases the potential user base of the NIRP.

Beyond connecting collections through ICT, the report was also keen to promote an inter-linking network of resources in real terms. As such, the key recommendation made by *Renaissance in the Regions* was the formation of regional hubs. With one leading museum partnered by up to three other institutions, these hubs are now responsible for disseminating information and advice to smaller institutions within their region; the intention being to promote best practice, each hub leading by example. To gain further expertise, the hubs are also encouraged to forge links with the national museums and galleries as well as university museums, with the ultimate aim of creating a flow of shared ideas among museums. Funding has been re-distributed to ensure that the leading institutions are able to achieve necessary standards in areas including collections care and management, curatorial research and scholarship, exhibitions, displays and interpretation, marketing and retailing and audience development.

As a venture that clearly supports at least the first two of the fields listed above, the NIRP, if successful, could potentially impact on all other areas of museum management. It is relevant to reiterate, however, the need for an accepted expectation that research and scholarship be a primary function of museums and galleries. The *Renaissance in the Regions* Task Force, in suggesting leadership roles that the regional hubs might play, observed the fact that 'scholarship – without which the knowledge represented by their collections cannot be liberated – has all but disappeared from our major regional museum and gallery collections. '[47] This quote perhaps most effectively sums up the importance of learning from collections through research and study in its reference to the liberation of knowledge. The NIRP looks to promote such study by making

[46] ibid, 19

available, effectively liberating, basic information about paintings in non-national collections. While promoting good documentation that complies with Registered museum status and by encouraging the sharing of information, as well as expertise, the NIRP is responding to the founding principles of the hub networks. Its ICT framework further demonstrates its fulfilment of the report's recommendations and the potential exists for numerous on-line links to relevant information portals and related web sites. In due course the NIRP will add to the foundation of knowledge upon which on-going collections-based research will be built.

As part of the information gathering stages of *Renaissance in the Regions* a number of experts were commissioned to submit essays to the Task Force, each dealing with a particular area of concern in the museum sector. Considering the associated problems of collections management and research, Professor Keith Thomson, Oxford University Museum, cited various needs to which the NIRP is now responding. 'Basic inventories are an essential first step in the process of making strategic decisions about resources. No strategic thinking about the future of collections and research is possible without complete information that can be compared and shared among institutions. '[48] Thomson's belief that information sharing was vital to ensuring that museums make full use of their collections was emphasised by his calls for on-line searchable databases. He did, however, state that 'information begins with unit-by-unit cataloguing'[49]. The provision of good, reliable documentation is fundamental to the NIRP and is the goal of those scholars sent to carry out research in regional collections. In line with Thomson's recommendations, they will aim to deliver comprehensive catalogue entries that will make the inventory a usable and relevant research tool.

> 'The meaning that can be read from, and into, an object is not complete without a full record and consideration of the object's context. Each object requires a provenance, a full contextual history: where it came from, when, how, by whom, what it has been used for; its history of ownership and use; and also when it has been published on, when and where exhibited, etc. Without such an information base the usefulness of the object is limited. '[50]

The initial resource for researchers gathering information for the NIRP will be object records held by the participating museums. Further research will stem from this first point of reference, with the

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[47] ibid, 101
[48] Prof. Keith Thomson, *Collections and Research*, The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, May 2001, 6
[49] ibid, 6
[50] ibid, 2

hope that perceived inaccuracies might lead to new knowledge. As suggested above, each inventory record will endeavour to recount a full history for the work in a concise, accessible and accurate format.

Neil MacGregor, then Director of the National Gallery, London, was a member of the *Renaissance in the Regions* Task Force and it was under his directorship that the gallery became the driving force behind the inventory project, offering the expertise and knowledge of its staff to support the regional research necessary for the project's successful completion. The first stage of the National Gallery's involvement was an application to the Pilgrim Trust for a grant that would allow the gallery to offer regional curators much-needed funding in order to carry out research on European paintings in their collections. Eventually their findings will enhance the primary aim of the NIRP to produce a searchable on-line database of all non-British European paintings, dated 1200-1900, in public collections throughout the UK. An ambitious project rooted in the fundamental documentation of a huge number of important paintings, the NIRP is an example of how, by making basic catalogue information available on-line, the potential exists to increase dramatically access to collections, promoting otherwise neglected resources.

In addition to the series of Pilgrim Trust grants being made available to fund curatorial research, the National Gallery is also sponsoring the Neil MacGregor Scholarship programme. Although MacGregor has since been appointed Director of the British Museum, many of the principles that informed his directorship of the National Gallery remain relevant. In particular, he has continued to assert the importance of the collection as the core of all museum services, emphasising the necessity for research in order that museums and galleries may serve their fundamental purpose in the 'advancement of knowledge'[51]. The scholarship programme is intended to provide postgraduate art history students with an opportunity to gain practical experience of a museum environment, applying academic research principles in a professional capacity. Directly linked to the NIRP and working with National Gallery staff, each scholar will complete a three-month period of research, examining up to eighty paintings from an assigned regional collection. In the form of catalogue entries, the accumulated research and gathered data will eventually become the core content of the inventory.

[51] Interview with Neil MacGregor, *Front Row*, BBC Radio 4, January 2001

The importance of comprehensively documenting individual works, considering the accuracy of existing knowledge while establishing such fundamental details as artist, title and date cannot be underestimated. These facts are often the first to be ascertained by the visiting public, although further questioning might aim to build a social history for the artist, understanding where the artist came from, how the artist worked or why the artist painted particular subjects. Responding to such enquiries can only be done through the provision of reliable and accessible information. Introducing the Neil MacGregor scholarships was a means by which to communicate the necessity of supplying such information to an emerging generation of museum professionals. In his new position as Director of the British Museum, MacGregor is continuing to perpetuate this ideal.

> 'The only way that you can make a collection like this [British Museum] mean anything to the visitor, to the world at large, is if there is a body of scholarly research going on which can then be disseminated to everybody. And one of the great traditions of the [British] museum is that it's really been the first Open University . . . everything from new research down to the label in the case, or the label on the sculpture, is part of that same process. '[52]

This statement forms a useful link between the idea of improved and enhanced documentation in museums and galleries offering increased intellectual access to collections. Although the end product of curatorial research may be academic in content and of interest predominantly to experts in a particular field, the outcome of any such study will still inform how an object is interpreted for the benefit of all visiting individuals.

Initially appointed Project Director to assess the feasibility of the NIRP database, Andrew Greg eventually became responsible for overseeing the project's launch and administration. Together with a Steering Committee made up of representatives from different institutions encompassing national, local authority and university museums Greg is continuing to pursue enthusiastically funding and support from a variety of sources in order to ensure the project's success. Both the University of Glasgow and Birkbeck College, London, made a commitment to support the NIRP's objectives in the long-term when the on-going viability of the project became dependent upon building partnerships within the academic community: academic participation in

[52] ibid

the NIRP increased the number of funding bodies that the project was eligible to apply to. In addition, this working relationship further strengthens the scholarly principles of the NIRP.

During an interview conducted for the purpose of this paper, Greg spoke of the need to 'address the decline in research'[53] in UK museums. Reinforcing judgments made by the *Renaissance in the Regions* taskforce, which were in turn prominently addressed in the full report, Greg described the inventory project as an opportunity for regional museums to seek help with researching their collections through sharing skills. Linking to the idea of forming regional hubs that would draw on the expertise of both national and university institutions, all museum professionals would work together to attain information reliable in content although of a relatively simple level. Greg described the founding principle of the NIRP as its aim to be 'comprehensive, consistent, reliable and useful'[54] and in order to fulfil this goal it will be necessary for the inventory to include all works that fall within the scope of the project, present information in a uniform manner, ensuring accuracy and quality control and, finally, make information and its presentation appropriate to the end user. In turn, the long-term aim is to increase dramatically scholarly and public access to the UK's public collections while raising the international profile of regional collections by encouraging research and exhibitions.

Before any concrete progress could be made, however, the NIRP needed to raise sufficient funds to make the project viable. Combined with the support of the National Gallery, London, a successful application was also made to the Getty Grant Programme and, through newly established academic links with the University of Glasgow and Birkbeck College, London, the NIRP was also able to apply to the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) for funding. Greg was, however, quick to emphasise the challenge of selling the project to potential funders. The main difficulty he faced was demonstrating the need for such a database and later justifying the academic relevance of the inventory. Although calls for such a facility had been made within the museum sector, proving a wider public demand was more difficult. In addition, such significant funding sources as the Heritage Lottery Fund did not feel that their funding criteria applied to the NIRP, largely because they regarded documentation and collections databases as a basic

[53] Interview with Andrew Greg, June 2004
[54] ibid

museum function, not eligible for additional funds. Further to this, the NIRP had not been in time to take advantage of short-term challenge funding that had been made available to support similar digitisation programmes.

An important turning point in assuring the feasibility of the NIRP was its merger with the Public Catalogue Foundation (PCF)[55], a registered charity with aims similar to those of the inventory project.

> 'The United Kingdom holds in its galleries and civic buildings perhaps the greatest publicly owned collection of oil paintings in the world. However, only about one in five of these paintings is ever on view. Four out of five are held in storage, usually because there are insufficient resources and exhibition space to show them. . . . In short, what is publicly owned is not publicly accessible. '[56]

With the same desire to promote the neglected regional collections of the UK as an important resource, the PCF also shared the primary objective of producing an inventory of such paintings, but with the additional intention of publishing in book format a fully illustrated catalogue for each region, together with free on-line access to the catalogues through a website. Previously, the cost of co-ordinating the photography of those works within the scope of the inventory project was prohibitive, but by offering scholarly support to the PCF a mutually advantageous union with the NIRP was established. Each catalogue entry included in the inventory will now be accompanied by a full-colour digital image.

Although this partnership removed a substantial degree of financial pressure from the NIRP, funds still had to be raised to transform the flat computerised database that would be the accumulation of the project's knowledge into an on-line searchable facility. Overcoming this digitisation funding crisis was made possible through a condition attached to the provision of AHRB funding. Any digital resource produced as the result of such funding must be made available to the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) who in turn ensure access to its content through their information portal.

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[55] The Public Catalogue Foundation (PCF) was founded in 2002 and became a registered charity in February 2003. In October 2003 the PCF merged with the National Inventory Research Project (NIRP). The PCF and the NIRP share the core aim of improving accessibility to regional public art collections in the UK, through improved cataloguing and on-line access.
www.thepcf.org.uk

[56] www.thepcf.org.uk

> 'AHDS Visual Arts mission is to support research, learning and teaching, by providing visual arts digital resources through robust systems for Internet access and long term preservation; and to encourage, support and facilitate engagement with visual arts digital resources, through collaborative and creative endeavour, primarily within UK Higher and Further Education. '[57]

Again, it was through its academic partners that the NIRP was eligible for support from the AHDS, a factor that has now guaranteed on-line delivery of the inventory. Further services offered by the AHDS include extensive guidelines to help shape the final content of any digitisation project, offering advice on copyright, digital imaging, data standards, project and collections management as well as resource delivery and preservation. The expertise of the AHDS will ensure that the findings of both the Neil MacGregor scholars and the curatorial research funded by the Pilgrim Trust through the National Gallery, London, will be responsibly recorded and made available to the widest possible audience. The emphasis on research within the Arts and Humanities organisation also assures the promotion of the inventory as a tool for academic research.

The NIRP has proved to be an interesting example of how it is possible to achieve increased intellectual access to museum collections on a nationwide basis. What is particularly interesting, however, is the combination of supporting bodies that have made the project possible, in terms of both expertise and funding. Having recognised the need within the museums sector for a better understanding of non-national collections through improved documentation, collections-based research and access, there was real motivation to make the national inventory a reality. Initiated by the National Gallery, London, and with the willing participation of the majority of regional collections throughout the UK, together with two University partners, the project is founded on a combination of national and regional curatorial expertise and academic principles. As a core ideal promoted by *Renaissance in the Regions* in England and echoed by the findings of the National Audit in Scotland, the NIRP fulfils on a number of levels recommendations made in both reports.

Such mutually beneficial working partnerships are an example of how collections can be promoted as a vital resource for research. In turn, museums benefit from external interest in their collections with the possibility for funding, exhibition and education opportunities securing wide use

[57] http://ahds.ac.uk/visualarts/about/index.htm

of collections. Celebrating collections and considering them an asset is something that Greg has been keen to advocate through his involvement with the NIRP and the project's success in linking the academic art history community with museums is an aspect that Greg believes has been particularly rewarding. When complete, the NIRP will provide scholars with a fundamental tool in researching works by particular artists, allowing them to search what has been acknowledged as a distributed national collection, rather than approaching their research on an institution by institution basis.

As with all short-term funded projects, however, it is necessary to consider the sustainability of the inventory. While the information comprising the database will be fully up to date at the time of entry, new research will potentially impact on accuracy. Upon completion of the project, the ideal would be to employ on a full-time basis someone responsible for over-seeing the editing of the database, including the addition of new information as it is submitted. At present, it is not clear how such sustainability will be achieved. Greg is hopeful that a nationally funded body might take over management of the database, but any such plans are vague. Continuing technical development in all areas of digital media compounds concerns relating to sustainability; a situation where the database became obsolete as a result of outdated technology might render its content useless.

Sustainability concerns aside, the outcome of the inventory project will have the undeniable advantage of improving the existing documentation of all works within the project scope in museums throughout the UK. As information is fed into the central database, so it will be fed back into regional collections management systems. Ultimately, the information will help regional museums use their collections, fulfilling greater potential, as knowledge of collections content and intellectual worth is increased.

3. National Galleries of Scotland

In its recent history the National Gallery, Edinburgh,[58] has seen the completion of a major refurbishment programme that reaffirms its position as a national institution of international standing. The Playfair Project, commenced in 2001, officially celebrated its end in August 2004 with the launch of the National Gallery's latest exhibition *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*[59], together with the opening of the Weston Link: an underground extension to the gallery's facilities providing state-of-the-art exhibition and education spaces and connecting the Royal Scottish Academy to the existing National Gallery building. These cosmetic improvements to the National Gallery are, however, underpinned by a determination within the institution to improve its public service, both to the Scottish people and visiting tourists. Perceived as the flagship institution of the museum and gallery sector in Scotland, the National Gallery has suffered in the past from an elitist reputation, but changing attitudes, both public and political, continue to counter this assumption. The National Galleries' image has undergone many changes and pressure similar to that felt by other institutions to increase access to its collections certainly exists at national level; realistically even more so as its Scottish Executive core funding brings with it an expectation that the Galleries will address and contribute to the fulfilment of political policies.

Working efficiently within the corporate governance framework provided by the Executive and demonstrating an understanding of the political priorities of the wider Scottish Parliament are two issues acknowledged in the *National Galleries of Scotland Corporate Plan 2003-2008*, affecting both decision-making and management. *Scotland's National Cultural Strategy*, together with the *21st-Century Government Action Plan* are two initiatives that have separately shaped the wider objectives of the National Galleries in very different ways. *Scotland's National Cultural Strategy*, with its emphasis on promoting Scotland's culture at home and abroad has placed importance on the Galleries' responsibility to continue to care for and preserve their collections while increasing usability and providing new resources for teaching and learning. Issues of social

[58] When discussing the National Gallery it is important to acknowledge that five galleries in Edinburgh, together with two gallery outposts to the north and south of Scotland, comprise the National Galleries of Scotland. For the purpose of this paper, however, unless stated otherwise references to the National Gallery concern the National Gallery of Scotland building on the Mound in Edinburgh. Collective references to the National Galleries describe all comprising institutions.

inclusion are also addressed, exploring how the Galleries might successfully reach community groups who are in danger of being, or have become, excluded. Serving all members of the community through the provision of a service that capitalises on Scotland's strong cultural identity is supported by the more practical framework of the *21st-Century Government*. By concentrating on building mutually beneficial partnerships with related bodies, creating a forum for the exchange of ideas and expertise, the National Galleries will be able to further demonstrate their commitment to supporting non-national institutions. Where 21st-century governments are described as open, accountable and inclusive, the National Galleries have identified ways in which they can adapt their service to improve public relations, aiming to instil in their staff an outward-looking focus. 'The National Galleries of Scotland aims to remain flexible in order to react to government priorities and ensure that policy issues are addressed. In this regard, the National Galleries of Scotland is working with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament to aid delivery of their policies under the National Cultural Strategy. '[60] In his foreword to the *Corporate Plan*, Sir Timothy Clifford, Director General of the National Galleries of Scotland, expresses enthusiasm for both the Galleries' recent achievements and future projects. Most prominently, he is keen that an outward-looking attitude continues to develop among staff that will help ultimately to promote the Scottish collections internationally.[61]

In 2002, while work on the Playfair Project was still on-going, Clifford gave an interview to *The Scotsman* during which he discussed his leadership of the Galleries and his professional ambitions. Printed in two parts, the second section of this article was subtitled *Elitist and Proud of it.*[62] Although not a direct quote from Clifford himself, in the concluding section of the interview when responding to suggestions that the Galleries do not strongly represent Scottish artists, or that they display a lesser interest in women artists, he did make the following point about the Galleries' collections, freely admitting his own indifference to concerns of political correctness. 'The point is, it's got to be great art. However much one talks about accessibility and things like that, all the buzz words, the only thing that really matters about the museum is whether it has great works of art in

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[59] Edinburgh, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, Royal Scottish Academy, National Galleries of Scotland, August-December 2004
[60] Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, *National Galleries of Scotland Corporate Plan 2003-2008*, Edinburgh, 2003, .12
[61] ibid, 3-4

it. '[63] On the surface this rather blunt statement could be interpreted as an admission of the elitism suggested by the subtitle of the article, but it also reflects a very real determination to achieve the highest standards possible in the preservation and enhancement of the national collection. Further to this, Clifford's goal of a confident national collection that will continue to strengthen Scotland's international profile, serving as a platform from which to celebrate culture and tradition, is made obvious. While his expression may be unconventional, great art as the priority of the Galleries clearly reflects Clifford's belief in the collection as the heart of the institution.

> 'Success in national collections is measured in many different ways, particularly in high attendance figures and wide access, in education, and in particular lifelong learning. The public at large want to feel that their collections are not only beautifully conserved and displayed, but are growing – in appropriate directions – with really fine quality additions. '[64]

Celebrating the gallery on the strength of such a collection, however, requires that it must be understood if it is to be fully appreciated and this can be achieved only through learning from the objects themselves and delivering information to an audience wider than the staff of the National Galleries.

Following through a commitment to achieve this, the National Galleries of Scotland decided to introduce a review process with the aim of accomplishing best practice in all areas of its service, the outcome and findings of which were recently published. 'The National Galleries of Scotland chose the 'Best Value Review' model because it asks the most important questions: "are we doing the right things" and "are we doing them correctly?" More familiar in a local authority context, this type of review is aimed at ensuring that services are efficient and accountable. '[65] Broadly positive in its findings, the most persistent criticism of the gallery in the *Best Value Review* centred around its need to be more pro-active in developing partnerships with other institutions, to increase access to the collections and widen the audience base and also to expand learning opportunities, particularly through more efficient use of new technologies. Public accountability is clearly an issue that the National Galleries of Scotland are duty bound to consider at every juncture, but the general public is not the only stakeholder group with an interest in the Galleries' activities.

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[62] Susan Mansfield, 'Visionary Man: Sir Timothy Clifford's Big Year Ahead', *The Scotsman S2*, 23 December, 2002
[63] Mansfield, (from interview with Sir Timothy Clifford), *The Scotsman S2*, 3
[64] Sir Timothy Clifford, Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, *National Galleries of Scotland Highlights 2001-2002*, Edinburgh, 2002, 4
[65] National Galleries of Scotland, *Best Value Review Summary*, Edinburgh, April 2004, 4

Far-ranging organisations and public bodies, not least the current Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament, influence and benefit from the Galleries' national and international work. Serving all museums, the SMC is considered a vital partner in helping the national institutions to disseminate good practice throughout the sector and local authority, university and independent museums and galleries often seek partnerships that will help to improve service. Patrons, friends, sponsors and benefactors all have a vested interest in how funds are allocated and resources utilised, while universities, other education bodies and the international art history community regard the collective National Galleries as a vital academic resource. Improving stakeholder access to the collections requires continuous effort and documents such as the *Corporate Plan*, annual publication of the *National Galleries of Scotland Highlights* report and regular gallery bulletins ensure that written accounts of the galleries' activities are available. Although such far-reaching responsibilities require excellent management, in all instances the collection inevitably reasserts itself as the foundation supporting the wider activities of the Galleries' and, as such, remains the stakeholders' focus.

Provision of collections access is fundamental to any museum or gallery and is most visibly achieved through the display of permanent collections and varying exhibition programmes. This is seen increasingly, however, as an insufficient use of resources when so many institutions hold the greater part of their collections in store. Although it may not be physically possible to show every object in a collection simultaneously, this does not detract from the worth and relevance of the stored works. A responsibility exists, therefore, to use alternative methods to ensure access. Predictably, expectations of access increase with collection prominence and on a national scale matchless provision must be made to ensure that the widest potential audience benefits from the institution and its resources. Criticism that the National Galleries of Scotland serves primarily the central belt is on-going, but Duff House in the north-east and Paxton House in the south of the country serve as two gallery outposts, providing additional exhibition space for works from the national collection, outwith Edinburgh. Allowing paintings and objects to travel, moving art away from the capital, is a way in which the Galleries have tried to demonstrate national ownership.

Further improvements of physical access to the stored collections of the National Galleries of Scotland occurred in 2002 with the opening of the Granton Centre for Art, an open storage

facility housing many items from the reserve collections and open to the public on supervised tours. A commitment by the Galleries, however, that these tours be curator led immediately raises resource concerns. The tours operate only once a week and, as they are infrequent and subject to limited numbers, attendance must be planned in advance. Although scholars wishing to view a particular work of art in the reserve collection would anticipate the necessity to make an appointment, it is less likely that a member of the general public would be inclined to do so when attending a public tour. To realise the ideal of open storage, better resourced and more frequent access is necessary, although the provision of remote on-line access to the national collections would be partial compensation for inevitable physical limitations.

Demonstrating a willingness to establish a manifestly inclusive service, thereby defying preconceptions about the management of the Galleries, has not been easy. The opportunity to discuss this and related issues with Anne Buddle, Head of Exhibitions and Collections Management in the Registrar's Department of the National Galleries of Scotland, offered some clarification of how history has influenced the position of the Galleries today.[66] As a national institution, the Galleries receive core funding from the Scottish Executive but securing funds has, in the past, been dependent on successfully demonstrating worth, with the result that museums and galleries could not help but become politicised; financial influence in turn giving rise to assumptions of elitism. More recently, however, collections have come to be valued as the physical manifestation of culture and are now widely considered to be assets. As a public relations tool, collections can be used to symbolise a country, instilling national pride and raising international profile, but usability is naturally dependent on appropriate management. The Collections Management section in the National Galleries of Scotland is responsible for the more routine, but fundamentally important, functions that mark the difference between the collection as a burden and the collection as a primary asset.

Within the larger Registrar's Department, Collections Management as a recognised section has only emerged in recent years, as a result of internal re-structuring. By re-organising how the department was managed, placing divisions between documentation, loans, exhibitions and

[66] Interview with Anne Buddle, Head of Exhibitions and Collections Management, National Galleries of Scotland, August 2004

technical aspects of management, while simultaneously defining job titles and remit, it was hoped that a new framework for Collections Management would improve the efficiency of the department; so far Buddle is confident that this has been demonstrated. Interestingly, no written policy guidelines for Collections Management exist within the National Galleries, although draft documents dealing with loans, acquisitions and exhibitions are available separately. It seems that Collections Management within the remit of the Registrar's Department has until now been considered so fundamental that no pressure has been placed on staff to produce a written document. Instead, the department works within the objectives and guidelines detailed in the Corporate Plan, responding to the needs of the curators and the demands of senior gallery managers.

Buddle credits an excellent working relationship with the Conservation department as a key factor in achieving outstanding collections care. Michael Gallagher, Keeper of Conservation at the National Galleries of Scotland, has overall responsibility for both the Conservation and Registrar's departments. In a recently published profile he explained why he believes that Conservation should be considered a core service in any museum or gallery, describing his work for the National Galleries in terms of its potential to impact upon issues of access to the collection. 'This isn't just a 'fix-it' department. I wanted to ensure that conservation is not just an add-on to the galleries but an essential component. After all, if the collections aren't right then we may as well forget about issues of access. '[67] This insightful relationship between Conservation, an internal service that has become a luxury rather than a necessity within most museums, and Collections Management guarantees that the two departments with primary responsibility for the physical care of objects in the national collection are working together to ensure a realistic balance between access and preservation.

While Collections Management and Conservation run parallel to one another, each performing a key role within the wider management of the Registrar's Department, Buddle still believes that the staff hierarchy of the Galleries places curators slightly above both these core services. She describes the curators as senior decision-makers, with principal responsibility for

[67] Sharon McCord (interview with Michael Gallagher), 'Under the Surface', *Museums Journal*, January 2004, 23

interpreting and researching the collection, despite the position of senior service managers. Following this suggestion, however, she is also quick to point out that culture change throughout the museums sector, with a growing emphasis being placed on issues such as marketing, fundraising, sponsorship and corporate affairs, is already impacting heavily on the internal structure of the National Galleries. A responsibility to remain at the forefront of the sector means that the National Galleries must be realistic about accommodating these new fields within their central service structure. Although traditional aspects of gallery management and function will remain, not least in terms of research and scholarship, success in the 21st-century demands that internal practice must continue to evolve for the institution to modernise and serve the needs of successive generations.

A strong foundation in collections-based research is something that national institutions traditionally excel at: expected to be the principal authority on their collections content, they achieve this through on-going scholarly research and publication. Obliged to work within the same guidelines applicable to any other public institution the National Galleries have, nonetheless, managed to avoid compromising research objectives in any way. Instead the research ethos of the Galleries in considering scholarship a duty and necessity has provided the foundation upon which its reputation is built. It is from such collections-based knowledge that confidence in collections care arises: the successful management and use of a collection, fulfilling an inherent responsibility to individual objects while still promoting the collection as a usable resource for learning, is only possible when the collection is comprehensively understood. Positive senior management attitudes to research have helped considerably in clarifying the academic role of curators within the National Galleries and, by making no apologies for on-going research, the presumed status of the national institution as a centre of excellence has been confirmed. A continued commitment to scholarship, consistently aiming to achieve such exemplary standards in all areas of gallery management, is considered key to achieving the best collections care possible.

To make research within the National Galleries visible it is important that curatorial knowledge is not internalised, but that research travels throughout the museums sector and the art history community. 'Curators are internationally respected scholars who contribute to scholarship and participate in academic debate worldwide. . . . They publish and lecture frequently and

organise many exhibitions. Their status is reflected in their membership of various national and international academic and exhibition committees. '[68] Defining the role of curators in this way strengthens the position of research within the national institution. Intellectual access by staff to all areas of the collection for the purpose of scholarly research is continuous and contribution of such research to publications is considered a fundamental aspect of the curatorial remit. Allowing external scholars to use the collection is also supported, particularly as such occasions may lead in the future to mutually beneficial relationships whereby research findings publicise the collection, or loans in support of a particular exhibition are made possible.

At present, the National Galleries also play an important role as an associate of the Visual Arts Research Institute, Edinburgh (VARIE). This organisation was established in 1999 to 'instigate, support and disseminate research initiatives undertaken by its Partner Institutions'[69] and as such it plays a key role in promoting museum collections as a resource for art historical research. With particular interest in supporting good working relationships between scholars and institutions, VARIE has both national and international scope. 'Drawing on Edinburgh's exceptional collections of fine art, applied art, and material culture, and on the research initiatives of the partner institutions VARIE promotes research into all areas of visual culture and cognition by . . . forming a discursive bridge between academia and Scotland's art collections. '[70]. The National Galleries' active membership of VARIE ensures the wide benefit of progressive curatorial study, while the potential for current thinking to be influenced by the input of external scholars is increased. An inevitable bias to the Scottish capital does exist in the membership of this body, however, as the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh College of Art, together with the Edinburgh-based national museums and art galleries play key roles, although attempts to widen participation in VARIE by incorporating the University of St Andrews and the University of Glasgow as associate members does, to an extent, benefit institutions outwith the capital. A national responsibility remains, however, to guarantee that academic support of higher learning, as offered by the nationals through partnership in VARIE, continues to reach all universities and further education bodies throughout Scotland. Although curatorial participation in initiatives such as VARIE, together with

[68] Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, *National Galleries of Scotland Corporate Plan 2003-2008*, 11
[69] http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/varie
[70] ibid

presence at lectures and conferences, are actively supported by the National Galleries, this remains a limited means by which to promote the scholarly resource of the collection and disseminate knowledge. Comprehensive cataloguing of the collection provides a hardcopy reference for scholars pursuing a particular artist or work, but the provision of an on-line searchable database would undoubtedly revolutionise intellectual access to the Galleries' collections.

Installation of a computerised database in the National Galleries of Scotland was first proposed in the late 1970s when funding to support this was made available. At that time, however, the requirement was to produce only a list of objects, rather than a fully comprehensive computerised catalogue. As such, after the initial set-up, the first computer record of the national collection was a list of register numbers that could not be cross-referenced or manipulated to produce statistical breakdowns of the collections content; a system that was essentially worthless in terms of its contribution to collections management. As a result, the decision was taken to guarantee quality over quantity. Good information content was prioritised over attempts to rapidly input information that was virtually useless due to its incomplete or insufficient state. Details such as artist name, object location and descriptive information were added to the files, making them accessible and relevant. In 1989 the Galleries adopted Quixis as their central CMS, predating a transfer to Multi-MIMSY in 2002. A system designed by people dedicated to museums, Multi MIMSY now serves the National Galleries of Scotland as a comprehensive CMS, founded on accuracy and depth of content.

Although the CMS plays a key role in providing access to the collections, at present such access is limited almost exclusively to internal users. Discussions with Buddle revealed a culture of curatorial possessiveness in relation to the Multi MIMSY object records: the system is frequently used by curators as a front-line resource for immediate access to the collections, helpful in answering external queries as well as exploring the collection in support of current research themes. Discrepancies or inaccuracies in data content are routinely referred to the documentation staff for correction and such issues are generally followed up by curators if they are not effected immediately. Curatorial access to Multi MIMSY is, however, limited to searching files, although they are able to attach descriptive text to individual records. There is no concern within the Registrar's department that this is an inefficient use of time and in fact Buddle did not believe that

curators would welcome a change to current practice. The clearly defined responsibility of the documentation staff to preserve the object records and ensure accuracy in data entry is counterbalanced by excellent curatorial input when it comes to object description and similar details. Consequently, documentation backlog in the National Galleries is relatively low and Buddle was able to refer specifically to the photography collection as the only major area of the Galleries' collection currently being tackled by a dedicated documentation assistant, in an effort to rectify the problem through concentrated effort.

Scottish Executive support of the internet and World Wide Web, together with the digitisation of various resources, continues to be actively promoted and the development of such ICT skills is an issue pertinent to both industry and individuals, in both the public and private sectors. ICT use in business has been identified as a means by which to promote product and place, but it is its potential to support the Executive's educational priorities as a tool for learning that is of particular relevance to the museum sector and especially to the core-funded national institutions. The development of ICT tools within museums, promoting collections and encouraging access, has been addressed by many organisations throughout Scotland and the impact of digitisation on education within museums has been successfully demonstrated on a number of occasions. Yet provision of such on-line access at the National Galleries of Scotland has not yet been realised and this lack of remote access to the collection is an issue that Buddle recognises as a failure. While emphasising that it is perfectly possible to use the CMS as the framework for making public access possible, she does not believe that responsibility for this facility should fall to the Registrar's Department. Although adamant that object information is there for everyone to use, with no restrictions other than to security-sensitive details, Buddle believes that the instigation of a digitisation policy must be centrally managed by senior museum staff.

ICT in the National Galleries of Scotland has been comprehensively addressed in the *Corporate Plan 2003-2008*, but progress to implement objectives is slow. Within the newly opened Weston Link at the National Gallery one of the facilities publicised has been the provision of an IT gallery. Realistically, however, such provision is weakened by the lack of comprehensive resources; as no on-line searchable database of the Galleries' collections exists, it was not possible to install computer stations that would immediately allow visitors to explore fully the

collections. Instead, so that a degree of computer access was still possible, the National Galleries developed information pods; individual computer stations each running a purpose-designed programme allowing limited exploration of some of the major works on display from the permanent collection. The content of these pods is based on an existing hardcopy *Companion Guide to the National Gallery of Scotland* that is sold through the gallery stores; justification for this was that a need and desire for the information published therein had already been established by good sales. Images from the guide were digitised for inclusion in the computer programme and text was edited to make sure that it was suitable for a wide range of users. Obviously the information made available through the pods reflects the wealth and depth of the gallery's knowledge about its collection, but it still reaches an audience comprising only gallery visitors. Not all paintings are included in the companion guide so many of those currently on display cannot be found in the database available through the pods.

The pods themselves operate as touch-screen computers, employing up-to-the-minute technology, but the reality of frequent use by visitors compromises their durability. Audiences now familiar with broadband internet use, giving immediate access to information, are less prepared to wait for programmes to load or digital images to resolve and focus. This has already caused some problems within the new IT gallery and prompts the question of whether or not it would have been more cost-effective to invest time and money in the later delivery of an on-line database rather than immediate delivery of a limited resource. 'To deliver the sort of electronic service the public now demands, existing and new databases will have to be developed and new software published to ensure that the wide ranging needs of the audiences are met. The Galleries is currently investigating how this initiative can be funded. '[71] Multimedia provision impacts on every objective listed in the National Galleries' most recent *Corporate Plan*, influencing care of collections, access, audience development, learning, international profiling and, most importantly, public service: it is something that the Galleries must get right if they are to continue to lead the sector by example. In 2003 a multimedia strategy for the Galleries was introduced and enhancing the website and public access are both issues central to the successful implementation of this. Although funding and other resources affect the speed with which new initiatives can be realised, if the National Galleries

[71] Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, *National Galleries of Scotland Corporate Plan 2003-2008*, 51

of Scotland are truly aiming to develop their international standing and widen their influence then remote access to their collections would be a fundamental factor in achieving this.

Without doubt, documentation of the national collections is exemplary and the Collections Management department continues to demonstrate best practice in its approach to collections care, but in order to maximise the potential return on such a solid information base, provision must be made for remote access to catalogue records. The Director General's desire for the National Galleries of Scotland to achieve a global presence is, at this time, only realistically possible in a virtual sense. ICT must be prioritised by the National Galleries so that information and research can be successfully disseminated and its reputation as a centre of excellence maintained.

4. Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow

Museums and galleries are expected to fulfil a multitude of different roles in their service as public institutions and education is frequently considered a central issue in the development of strategy, forward planning and museum management. The primary responsibility of museums, however, remains the care of their collections: only upon the foundation of sound knowledge of collections content and a viable collections management policy can further aims relating to issues such as research, education and marketing be developed. It is therefore interesting to consider how a university museum chooses to define its role and responsibilities as a public institution, and whether academic priorities influence collections care and management. This chapter will look at how the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery combines, through its attachment to the University of Glasgow, two different types of public-serving body. The Hunterian's approach to collections management and research will be considered in light of its service to the visiting public, as well as the linked academic departments and student body. How it strives to address the issue of increasing intellectual access to collections by making objects available for teaching and research will be explored through an examination of its documentation strategies and an assessment of the usability of its collections management system.

As centres of academic excellence, the schools of a university recognise on-going research as a priority and it would be understandable to assume similar priorities would exist within a university museum, where professional interests inevitably combine service to both university and museum. This is not, however, representative of how the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery sees itself. In order, therefore, to achieve a clearer insight of the Hunterian's policies and practices an interview was arranged with Dr. John Faithfull, Curator in Geology at the museum.[72] Faithfull's involvement with the Hunterian encompasses far more than his principal curatorial duties. Heavily involved with collections management, he designed and wrote the computerised collections management system, INCA, used by the Hunterian. With an in-depth understanding of the potential for new ICT to deliver improved access to collections, Faithfull was able to represent the Hunterian through well-informed responses to questions focusing on how the Hunterian defines its objectives as a university museum and how intellectual access to its collection is promoted and

[72] Interview with Dr. John Faithfull, Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, May 2004

improved through INCA and its capabilities. Based on these discussions, it would be accurate to describe the Hunterian as a museum, first and foremost.

Considering the issue of research within the Hunterian, Faithfull expressed the opinion that the museum's links to the University of Glasgow don't confer an automatic right for museum staff to pursue individual research, but instead provide a means by which research can be successfully reconciled with the role of the museum. 'Museums don't exist to do research, but exist to enable others to do so. '[73]. Faithfull's suggestion is that the museum staff must work as 'enablers' in order to ensure that the collection is accessible and usable. Fundamental to this is the promotion of the collection, selling its importance and usefulness to the immediate academic community as well as internationally. It was not Faithfull's intention to deny, however, the importance of on-going collections research within each curatorial department. The *Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery Forward Plan 2002-2006* reflects his idea of the museum's role in assisting research and identifies the Hunterian's primary research priority as aiming to 'support and facilitate research on collections'[74]. Staff research is a further objective detailed in the forward plan and it is clear that the importance of research as a factor in successfully delivering, within all departments, the standard of service expected of an international institution is accepted and understood. Through a programme of collaborative projects, conference attendance, publication of research and well-resourced on-going collections-based research, the Hunterian hopes to increase the breadth of staff knowledge, benefiting both internal and external museum users.

Returning to the definition of the Hunterian as a university museum, another relevant factor in determining the importance of staff research is the requirement to submit research periodically to the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise), a body that exists to assess standards of research at higher education level. As part of the University of Glasgow the Hunterian has a responsibility to contribute. The RAE, through its panels of experts drawn from relevant fields, is able to assess the quality of research being conducted in higher education institutions throughout the UK and grade success according to a system of star-ratings. Their findings in turn influence the higher education funding bodies in the distribution of public money to support research. 'Institutions conducting the

[73] Interview with Dr. John Faithfull
[74] Museums and Galleries Committee, *Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery Forward Plan 2002-2006*, University of Glasgow, October 2002

best research receive a larger proportion of the available grant so that the infrastructure for the top level of research in the UK is protected and developed. '[75]. Aware of the prestige that recognition for outstanding research can bring to an institution, together with the importance of additional funding opportunities to ensure the longevity of research programmes, the Hunterian is careful to include RAE targets in its forward plan. In the period 2002-2006 the museum is looking to actively encourage staff and Research Fellows to publish research in journals recognised by the RAE. In defining the criteria for supporting staff research, RAE-eligible publication is given prominence[76].

In the mission statement that preludes the introduction to the Hunterian's *Collections Policies and Procedures* document, the reconciliation between academic research and collections care and management is again indicated.

> 'The Hunterian's mission is:
>
> > *to maintain and develop the Hunterian collections of the University of Glasgow as an outstanding resource for research, lifelong learning, and enjoyment, accessible to all.* ' [77]

Reflecting the Museums Association agreed definition of museums, this mission statement consciously emphasises the perception of the collection as a 'resource for research'. Moreover a commitment is made, not only to care for the collection, but to develop it. Echoing the combined goals of 'supporting and facilitating research'[78] by both external users and museum staff, this is perhaps where the nature of the Hunterian as a university museum is most clearly demonstrated.

Built upon the original bequest in 1783 by William Hunter, the intended use of the Hunterian collections was to benefit the students studying in the various academic schools of the University of Glasgow. Since that time, the collections have continued to grow and in 2002, as with the National Gallery, Edinburgh, and Glasgow Museums, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery participated in the Scottish National Audit. When the results of this report were published the University of Glasgow was listed as the third largest organisation in Scotland of those considered to hold collections of objects that were of national and international significance. In promoting the

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[75] www.hero.ac.uk/rae/AboutUs
[76] Museums and Galleries Committee, *Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery Forward Plan 2002-2006*
[77] The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, *Collections Policies and Procedures*, February 2004, University of Glasgow, 3
[78] Museums and Galleries Committee, *Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery Forward Plan 2002-2006*

idea of a 'distributed national collection'[79] *The National Audit* helped to increase awareness of the wealth of collections across Scotland, without focusing solely on the recognised national institutions. The impact of these findings upon the Hunterian further clarified its position as a museum, responsible for the care of its collection, rather than being merely an extension of the academic schools of the university.

In the same year that *The National Audit* was published, the director of the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, Dr. Evelyn Silber, gave a particularly relevant paper during the University Museums in Scotland (UMIS) Conference, 2002[80]. Silber addressed the issue of research, and how best to combine academic research with good museological practice. She identified the evolving nature of the Hunterian as a public institution in its own right as the main factor that had necessitated change in curatorial attitudes. While continuing to assert the importance of academic research and therefore subsequently increased knowledge of the Hunterian collections, Silber nevertheless asked a very pertinent question; 'should research be our priority when we can still provide pathetically little information on what we have and are wrestling with massive documentation backlogs and unaudited collections? '[81] From this it must be accepted that while the position of the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, through its links to the University of Glasgow, maintains an inherent academic nature, responsibility to its collections must be prioritised over and above research. Without sufficient or reliable records of the collection content the museum is severely impeded in its efforts to promote in-house research, as well as wider scholarly access. Comprehensive documentation of the collection is necessary to ensure a programme of research that will benefit both internal and external museum users.

Recently published, *University Museums in the United Kingdom: A National Resource for the 21st Century*[82] is a report that explores the current position of university museums throughout the UK while also considering their potential for playing a more active part within the wider museum and gallery sector. A central theme of this report is the idea that although many university

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[79] Scottish Museums Council, *The National Audit*
[80] Dr. Evelyn Silber, *What's in a name? Research by any other name might smell so sweet*, www.dundee.ac.uk/umis/conference2002
[81] ibid
[82] University Museums UK Group, *University Museums in the United Kingdom: A National Resource for the 21st Century*, 2004, www.umg.org

museums have become centres of excellence in their own right, external recognition of their on-going museological achievements is lacking. Of particular interest to this paper is the attempt to promote the idea of combining improved collections management with the more traditionally perceived priority of research. As has been discussed the Hunterian believes that as a museum its key role is as a facilitator in allowing external users to learn from its collections. Complying with the findings of the university museums report, this attitude is evidence of the Hunterian's forward-thinking approach. 'At their best, university museums provide a conjunction between the object, its documentation, associated archive material and academic expertise to offer richly-textured evidence that stimulates thinking and new knowledge. '[83] Further to this, a number of wide-reaching recommendations made by the report with the intention of streamlining and developing the services offered by university museums to the wider community are already considered standard practice by the Hunterian. Research partners, both nationally and internationally, have been fostered by the museum to support access and learning and their progressive ICT programme is a working example of how comprehensive on-line searching vastly enhances remote access to collections. In summarising their potential, the report describes university museums as 'innovative, interdisciplinary and challenging',[84] crediting their academic links as a pivotal factor in achieving standards of excellence. 'In a climate of academic freedom they can engage publicly with difficult issues that other museums are less able to address. They challenge collections management presumptions, with their capacity to share material, redistribute it, dispose of it, catalogue it and investigate its material components in innovative ways. '[85] The collections management policies and practices of the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery is an example of the kind of challenging approach referred to above; the museum's innovative methods ensure an optimum level of collections care that is rooted in sound curatorial knowledge.

Management of the Hunterian's extensive collections is the accepted responsibility of all museum staff: rather than one person or department being accountable for the museum's collections management policies, a representative committee exists to provide input from all curatorial areas. This approach to collections management through a Collections Management Forum ensures that the policies implemented by staff are realistic and achievable, not least in

[83] ibid, 10
[84] ibid, 35
[85] ibid, 35

relation to documentation where, as with many similar institutions of its size, the Hunterian faces a huge backlog. Whether or not this system would be practicable in a different kind of museum is doubtful. The Collections Management Forum evolved within the Hunterian to serve the specific need of caring for the collection and so has been instrumental in defining the role of the Hunterian within the larger institution of the University of Glasgow. By introducing designated collections-management staff the carefully established balance between curatorial duties and research may well be disrupted. Rather than relying on co-operation between curators and collections management, the mutual dependency of the forum guarantees that decision making reflects both a professional interest in what is best for the collection and the academic knowledge that recognises the research potential of disparate objects.

Consequently it is the remit of the Documentation Committee, drawn from collections management staff, to deal with all issues pertaining to the cataloguing of the Hunterian collection. The vast natural history collection alone contains innumerable specimens, each one important but together totalling hundreds of thousands of objects. Documenting each individual specimen is beyond the capability of any museum faced with the limited resources of funding, time and staffing. In order to combat this issue the Hunterian developed an innovative approach to group accessioning, a practice that has since been promoted by the mda and added to *SPECTRUM*, the documentation standard for museums throughout Britain.

Following rigorous guidelines, the Hunterian has been pursuing a programme of group accessioning for over six years. Almost exclusively used for examples of natural history collections such as rock samples, soil samples or insect species, each group of objects is given a group number; the collector is then recorded, along with the locality that the collection originated from and references of relevant publications. This approach is effective not only in ensuring that specimens are recorded in the collections-management system, but it is also time-efficient. Sufficient information is provided through a group record to ensure that interested parties or scholars can be referred to the appropriate area of the collection and are then able to use specimens for teaching or research. Through such successful projects as this, the Hunterian demonstrates how a museum can use documentation to further aid and promote intellectual access to its collections. Catalogue

entries for group accessioned objects are held within the Hunterian's HUG[86] system, a collections-management database specifically designed to store information about related groups of objects. Describing the usability of such a system, Faithfull explained that scholars hoping to research specimens from grouped collections expected to look through numerous examples before finding one suitable for their purposes. By being able to ascertain whether or not the Hunterian might hold an appropriate group of specimens, HUG is instrumental in allowing such scholars increased intellectual access to a vast natural history collection.

INCA, the collections-management system used by the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, works alongside HUG to provide a comprehensive overview of the documented collection. Staff members are trained to use INCA, with full editorial access to ensure that information is kept as up to date as possible. A system of backing up records several times a week and INCA's in-built ability to create a full data trail for changes made to each record make it virtually impossible to delete an entry fully. Errors in editing can also be traced to the staff-member responsible as login-details are directly linked to any changes being made. Developed in-house, INCA combines the standard principles of a collections-management system with advanced digital capabilities. Through INCA's web interface all catalogue records are available on-line as a searchable database and it is a recognised Hunterian policy that, as far as possible, information continues to be made available in this way. 'Since 2001 it has been our policy to make full information from our INCA catalogues (subject to legal restrictions such as the Data Protection Act, and copyright law) available to the public via a searchable front-end on our Web pages.'[87] In order not to compromise necessary confidentiality in relation to storage locations, insurance values and other sensitive information, INCA gathers information from designated fields and feeds it into the web. The CMS remains separate so that it cannot be accessed through the web. Faithfull, himself largely responsible for the development of INCA and its sophisticated capabilities, is enthusiastic about the use of the web in promoting and using museum collections.

When discussing the potential of on-line museum catalogues Faithfull was firm in his conviction that digitisation of collections should be an on-going priority in all museums and art

[86] The origin of this acronym is 'Hunterian Uncatalogued Group'.
[87] The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, *Collections Policies and Procedures*, 10

galleries. While acknowledging the difficulties faced by those museums that are only now beginning to rely on a computerised CMS, Faithfull made clear his belief that limited access to some information was preferable to no access at all. Describing the success of a computer system in terms of completeness over functionality, Faithfull's insistence was that by providing the basic information held in the CMS, including for example maker, title, medium and date, there was then the opportunity for some degree of remote access to an otherwise closed collection. From this, an external scholar researching a particular subject or the work of one artist would be able to identify the potential of the Hunterian as a source of supporting information. The provision of such a system would not rely on an aesthetically pleasing website design, but on accurately inputting foundation documentation in the CMS and making this information immediately available on-line.[88]

An undeniable advantage in achieving this returns us to the nature of the Hunterian as a university museum. Where digital media may not be a funding priority in smaller institutions, the Hunterian is able to draw on the capabilities and expertise of the linked academic schools and university facilities, as well as international learning partners. Its achievements in terms of digital media and developing on-line resources are remarkable, assuring the Hunterian a position at the forefront of this particularly progressive field. Partnered by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, USA, the Hunterian has demonstrated that, by building on the core function of a museum as an institution that houses and cares for a collection, it is possible to ensure that up-to-the-minute technology can be applied to centuries-old objects, thus making them accessible and relevant to successive generations.

> 'The Smithsonian Institution and the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery on their respective sides of the Atlantic, have established leading edge practices in the field of digital imaging for the scientific and cultural heritage sector. This project brings together the expertise of the Education and Digital Media Service at the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, and the Centre for Scientific Imaging and Photography at the Smithsonian Institution. SHADE (Smithsonian-Hunterian Advanced Digitisation Experiments) builds on skills-sharing activities between staff at the Smithsonian Institution and the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery to further develop the potential of emergent technologies for the presentation of museum collections through digital media to an ever widening audience. '[89]

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[88] Interview with Dr John Faithfull, May 2004
[89] Jim Devine & Ewan Smith, *Research? Think Again!*, www.dundee.ac.uk/umis/conference2002

Digitisation as an emerging area of collections management has been discussed so far only in terms of creating searchable on-line databases of museums collections. The scope of SHADE and its potential to expand learning further in the field of digital imaging and web access propose a much more advanced means by which to allow for increased intellectual access to museums collections. Ultimately, virtual tours of museum collections would be available. Entire collections would be visible on-line through digital images, supported by the technology to offer rotating three-dimensional views of an object on-screen, allowing web users to manipulate their virtual experiences according to individual needs. It could be argued, however, that such a state of digital supremacy might undermine the essential role of the museum, failing to communicate the true nature of the object and its position within an expansive collection. Certainly Faithfull is wary of relying too much on the 'virtual museum', stressing that offering the full functionality of a museum on-line is not possible. Replacing personal experience with a virtual tour that might distort the scale and texture of an object and fail to reflect the atmosphere of the museum removes physical interaction between object and person and is therefore something that cannot be totally effective. Core to learning from an object is visual inspection and digital media cannot provide this fundamental experience. Successful academic research must always return to the object and, while digitisation is crucial in today's museum environment, in order to promote collections, the usability of such collections is still primarily reliant on a collections-management policy that is founded in successful documentation and knowledge of the collection content.

Despite differing views on how best to achieve it, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery maintains a progressive attitude towards ensuring intellectual access to its collections. As the present issue of Freedom of Information is being assimilated by the museum sector the Hunterian is addressing the issue independently, as a museum, rather than through the University of Glasgow. It is clear that the Hunterian believes that academic knowledge is effectively public domain, provided that the source of the information is acknowledged. While some issues of confidentiality may arise through necessity, the majority of collections information should be seen and used by the public. Basic information is the key to providing a starting point for research and by ensuring that foundation documentation is available as a public resource the Hunterian invites public interest in its resources.

Overcoming the inevitable tension between caring for and using a collection is particularly relevant in an environment where some university departments may wish to carry out intrusive research in subjects such as geology and natural history. Curatorial discretion must be used to ensure that the mission statement of providing an 'outstanding resource for research'[90] is achieved, without detriment to the collection. In a contrasting situation, however, it is the responsibility of the museum to promote the use of the collection in those departments less inclined to incorporate the Hunterian resources in their teaching. Although the Hunterian is without doubt defined by its title as a university museum, it cannot make it compulsory for the academic departments to use the museum collections. Equally, however, the collection must be used to ensure the viability of the Hunterian. As increasing public demands are made on museums to prove their worth as educational resources there must be equivalent pressure within museums to guarantee the availability of information. As a university museum, the Hunterian is in a position to lead the way in delivering the best possible educational service, encompassing all levels of intellectual access. The key to such a delivery is in acknowledging the collection itself as the root of all possibilities.

In its *Forward Plan 2002-2006* the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery lists the relevant factors that must be overcome in order to achieve its ten year strategic aims. Foremost is 'the need to define a clear role for a modern university museum and gallery with an internationally important collection.'[91] Upon achieving this the Hunterian then hopes to fulfil its primary aim of being a 'university museum of the 21st century, making the excitement of research, discovery, questioning, hypotheses etc. visible in the presentation of old and new artefacts.'[92] The reputation of the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery continues to strengthen both within Glasgow and internationally. With a firm foundation in teaching and learning, due largely to its links with the University of Glasgow, the Hunterian can be relied upon to promote its collections as a research tool, maximising accessibility. In defining its status as a museum and by clarifying its collections-management policies, the Hunterian successfully demonstrates the research potential of its collections. A comprehensive approach to inputting information in both INCA and HUG and a determination to make that information immediately available on-line through a searchable

[90] The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, *Collections Policies and Procedures*, 3
[91] Museums and Galleries Committee, *Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery Forward Plan 2002-2006*, 3
[92] ibid, 4

database provides the gateway for external scholars to explore the collection, supporting the roles of both university and museum.

5. Glasgow Museums Case Study: Part 1

As a case study the city of Glasgow's museum service is an ideal example of how improved documentation can serve to increase intellectual access to museum collections. From its inception in 1854 as the Glasgow Corporation Art Galleries and Museums, an ever evolving programme of growth and development has helped to establish Glasgow Museums as the largest local authority museum service in the United Kingdom. Founded on the strength of an internationally important bequest by Archibald McLellan of European paintings, Glasgow's collection is of sustained and continuing interest to many art historians worldwide. There are, however, many areas of the collection where research potential has remained unrealised and possibly unrecognised. Recently, however, attempts are being made to resolve this situation by promoting a renewed interest in the city's collections.

Since opening to the public in October 1902, Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery has been the flagship of Glasgow's museum service. Housing the largest proportion of the city's civic collection, the building quickly became a community focus for Glasgow residents as well as attracting large numbers of visiting tourists. Currently the subject of a major refurbishment programme, in June 2003 Kelvingrove closed to visitors and emptied of its collection will remain closed until 2006. During this time, the Kelvingrove New Century Project aims to redevelop the services offered by the museum, adopting innovative approaches in order to increase the museum's audience, with improved access at the top of the project's list of aims: '[to] achieve great improvements in the emotional, intellectual, aesthetic and physical access to the collections in ways that will help achieve the city's educational and social inclusion objectives. '[93]

New displays will be built around the idea of 'stories: rather than maintaining strict chronological or subject-focused themes within individual gallery spaces, objects will be selected for their relevance and worth in communicating with the audience by contributing to a story. Stories include topics such as Scottish Identity and Art and, within this, *Tartanalia*; by thematically linking objects in a variety of media the story of the history of tartan will be told. A combination of

[93] Glasgow City Council (Museums), *Annual Benchmarking Report 2002/03*, Glasgow City Council, 2004, 11

fine art, decorative art, costume and weaponry will together place in context a story accessible to a range of museum visitors.

> 'The re-designed Kelvingrove will create a more accessible and visitor friendly attraction, with better and larger shops, café and toilet facilities. There will be more objects on display than ever before within our 19 major galleries. There will be a wide range of educational and learning facilities for all age groups.
> The intention is to create a 21st Century Museum in Glasgow's favourite Edwardian building and build an exciting future on a proud past. '[94]

To ensure that the intention of widening public access to Glasgow's collections would not be compromised during the refurbishment process a temporary exhibition entitled *Art Treasures of Kelvingrove* opened in April 2003 at Glasgow's McLellan Galleries.[95] Named after the original owner, Archibald McLellan, this building was bought by the Glasgow City Corporation after McLellan's death and has been used as an exhibition space since the mid 1800s. It is now playing an important role by guaranteeing continued access to some of the most important objects in the Glasgow collection. *Art Treasures of Kelvingrove* has also been used as an opportunity to trial the new design and interpretation ideas being developed for the re-display of Kelvingrove; by gauging visitor experiences, Glasgow Museums are able to respond to public demand, their service delivery ultimately reflecting this. The exhibition also has the added advantage of providing the museums service with a means by which to continue promoting the Kelvingrove New Century Project, sustaining expectation and anticipation while refurbishment continues.

In addition to this, *Millet to Matisse: Nineteenth and Twentieth century French painting from Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow*, a touring exhibition of 64 of the collection's key French paintings from Kelvingrove, is underway in the USA and Canada, again bringing prominence to the wealth of Glasgow's collection by promoting it on an international scale. A comprehensively researched catalogue accompanies this exhibition, for the first time publishing the most up to date information available about this part of the collection.[96] The potential to reach a wide audience as the paintings travel is huge and in summer 2005 the exhibition will open in Kirkcudbright Town Hall, promoting the collection nationally, as well as internationally. Both these projects serve as an example of the

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[94] Glasgow Museums, *Kelvingrove New Century Project*, Glasgow City Council, www.glasgowmuseums.com
[95] Glasgow, *Art Treasures of Kelvingrove*, McLellan Galleries, Glasgow Museums, opened April 2003
[96] Vivien Hamilton, *Millet to Matisse: Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century French Painting from Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow*, exh. cat., Glasgow Museums, London, 2002

kind of collections-based knowledge supporting the progressive forward-thinking ambition of Glasgow Museums: something that was demonstrated further by the official opening of the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre in November 2004.

Through access to this high-tech open storage facility, the visiting public are offered an insight into the depth and scale of Glasgow's stored collections and, in addition, the Resource Centre is also the base for the Open Museum. A small-scale initiative begun as a means by which the museums service could reach a wider audience, the Open Museum is now one of Glasgow Museums' most powerful outreach tools. Considered collectively, these current and on-going initiatives to improve access and learning within Glasgow Museums by renewing a collections-based focus across all departments reflect a sustained dedication to promoting the learning potential of the service. By exploring how collections information is organised and made available, this case study aims to determine the impact that improved documentation might have on increasing intellectual access. Although it is accepted that some information will exist on the majority of the objects in the collection, unless such information is organised in a systematic manner it remains difficult to access. To achieve the desired level of usefulness curatorial staff within Glasgow Museums must be relied upon to feed specialist knowledge into the CMS and in turn the collections-management staff must have in place an effective structure for gathering and managing this information. Through the practical experience of creating a draft catalogue of the Italian paintings in Glasgow Museums' collection it will be possible to demonstrate the research potential of the collection, while also promoting its usability as an academic resource.

The nature of Glasgow Museums as a local authority institution dictates that it is subject to changing governments and changing tastes, affecting the status of both funding and staffing structures. In 1998, Glasgow City Council amalgamated the services for Performing Arts and Venues, Museums and Art Galleries, Libraries and Archives, and Sport, Recreation and Play, bringing them together under the umbrella of Cultural and Leisure Services. This decision was rooted in the promise of the City Council to offer 'best value' to the people of Glasgow, and it was from this commitment that the *Best Value Review: Museums, Heritage and Visual Arts* grew.

Published in June 2000, while this report had a profound impact throughout the museums service, most notable were the foremost aims of ensuring that the Glasgow Museums service was accessible, inclusive and facilitated education and lifelong learning. These objectives in turn reflected the corresponding policies of the new Scottish Parliament, which had made education a core priority throughout Scotland. The policy goal of the *Best Value Review* summarises these expectations:

> '. . . the City Council is entitled to expect that Glasgow Museums will be judged on their **educational** performance and resourced according to the priority which the Scottish Parliament and people have accorded to **education** in its broadest sense. In order to deliver the Museums' contribution to lifelong learning and education, it is essential that objects be preserved and studied, and indeed collected. '[97]

While education is deliberately highlighted in this statement as the principal goal of the museum service, it is also acknowledged that delivery of a successful education programme remains dependent upon using the museum collection. Although education might be considered the primary role played by the museum in the community, the collection remains at the heart of the museum and dictates the role it must play as an institution. This shifts the emphasis once more back to the museum's collection and, more specifically, its responsibility for the preservation, study and collecting of objects.

Following a standardised review process, Glasgow City Council aimed to establish through the *Best Value Review* the effectiveness of its museums service, identifying necessary changes that would guarantee better service delivery. Preparation for the report included extensive research, consultation, workshops, a Museums Service Staff Panel and a People's Panel on the Museums Service, the ultimate aim of these panels being to gauge opinion both internally and externally on the successes and failures of the museum service, prioritising areas in need of improvement. Detailing findings in chapters divided according to key areas of the museum framework including access, collections management, conservation and exhibitions, the report explored each relevant issue before listing policy objectives that, once achieved, would enrich the service provision. A recognised need demonstrated by the report to 'improve the care, audit and access of Glasgow's collections'[98] gave rise to the following aim of 'improving public and staff

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[97] Glasgow City Council: Cultural and Leisure Services, *Best Value Review: Museums, Heritage and Visual Arts*, 6
[98] ibid, 22

access to collections and information about collections'[99]. These two successive statements reinforce the theory that only by laying a foundation of knowledge upon which to build improved collections-based learning will the desired level of widespread access be achieved, both within the service and through additional public access.

Recently published, the *Annual Benchmarking Report 2002/03* is the first assessment of the progress made by the Glasgow Museums service since recommendations made by the *Best Value Review* were initiated. In the preface to this report, Councillor John Lynch, Convenor of Cultural and Leisure Services, describes Best Value as having provided the opportunity to 'revive one of the great museum services in Britain'[100]. The report then goes on to appraise individually the achievements of each department in meeting the challenges set by the review. Central Services, responsible for 'the physical integrity of the collection and for the quality of the information communicated to the public about it'[101] co-ordinates the activities of its five sections: comprising Collections Management, Communications, Conservation, Logistics and Major Projects and Research. The evaluation of the first and last of these sections is of particular relevance to this paper.

Previously incorporated into the remit of Conservation, Collections Management as a distinct department is a relatively recent development. Such being the case, collections-management priorities within Glasgow Museums are still dealing with the fundamental need to improve access to information, primarily by achieving the Best Value aims of complete inventory and guaranteeing the accuracy of documentation records. A secondary priority will be to make sure that this information is centrally available on the CMS, a resource with the potential to support further collections-based research. Exploring this documentation project in the context of Glasgow Museums' *Collections Management Five Year Plan* makes clear the fact that documentation remains at the root of all collections-based activities within the museum service.

Although at present still in its draft format, the *Collections Management Five Year Plan* for Glasgow Museums is a comprehensive document that systematically summarises key collections

[99] ibid
[100] Glasgow City Council (Museums), *Annual Benchmarking Report 2002/03*, 2
[101] ibid, 28

management objectives, in turn analysing how each objective might be achieved. In the introductory section of this report the remit of the department is reconciled with its strategic goals, defining collections management as ' . . . the process which allows us to manage and use Glasgow Museums collections, and those of Lenders to Glasgow Museums, accountably and effectively. '[102] Undoubtedly the foundation of collections management is accounting for the collection; effective management of the collection in all respects is not possible unless a complete inventory of the collection is available. Therefore, facilitating the care and study of the museums' collection and allowing its educational potential to be fully realised is reliant upon good information resources. The *Best Value Review* recognised a need in Glasgow Museums for collections-management staff to be responsible for the management of information, as well as the practical management of objects. In order to achieve both these aims the collections-management team need to know exactly what the collection comprises. 'The inventory is a requirement of Registration and of Audit, and the provision of a catalogue is a fundamental prerequisite of access: unless information is organised it cannot be made available. '[103] In line with the recommendations of Best Value, a basic inventory of the collection commenced. The next stage was to ensure that each object in the Glasgow Museums collections was documented and recorded to an acceptable standard. Unfortunately, the legacy of a documentation backlog spanning the lifetime of Glasgow Museums has yet to be fully overcome, although progress continues to be made. Together with the on-going basic inventory, efforts are being made to ensure that the other key collections-management aims of Glasgow Museums are being initiated.

Documentation is naturally identified as being a core factor in the successful management of information about collections and issues relating to the documentation of objects are addressed in Glasgow's *Collections Management Plan.* Making this information available through the CMS used by Glasgow Museums, Multi MIMSY, has been prioritised as a means by which to improve access to collections at all levels. Considering in particular the documentation of the Italian paintings, however, it must be noted that the greater part of information relating to these objects held by Glasgow Museums is contained within the original object files for these works, not on the

[102] Glasgow Museums Central Services Department: Collections Management Section, *Collections Management Draft Five Year Plan 2003-2008*, 2
[103] ibid, 52

CMS. As a primary resource the CMS is thereby compromised; incomplete content prevents it from effectively fulfilling its role of providing full documentation records for each individual object. Multi MIMSY's effectiveness is inevitably dependent on the quality of information originally entered and in order to resolve this situation of partial records a programme of enhanced documentation projects has been recognised as a necessity within the museums service. The successful completion of such projects would ultimately ensure that the Multi MIMSY database could fulfil its potential as an information resource, useful to both museum staff and external scholars wishing to explore the collection further. Ultimately, the enhanced documentation work carried out in support of this case study will feed back into the Multi MIMSY database, further supporting the collections-management aim of 'using the database as a pool for collections information enhancement projects'[104].

As a department, Major Projects and Research was created as a result of the service re-structure that followed Best Value and has been described as 'one of the most important innovations of the restructuring'[105]. Dependent on Collections Management for the provision of basic information about the collection, Major Projects and Research will be pivotal in successfully reconciling improved documentation with increased intellectual access to the collection and continuing collections-based research. 'The aim of the section [Major Projects and Research] is to develop Glasgow Museums as a centre for excellence in collections-related research, developing programmes of internal and external research and ensuring that all major projects are underpinned with the best current knowledge. '[106] Comprising a group of Research Managers who are each responsible for a key area of the collection, Major Projects and Research has the potential to improve dramatically Glasgow's museum service by liaising with Collections Management, Conservation and Education to promote the usability of the collection, reconciling accountability with access. By reviving the collection through a programme of research projects that will ultimately bring local, national and international attention to Glasgow's collections this department aims to re-establish research as a core function within the museum service. Opportunities for access and lifelong learning will continue to develop as collections-based knowledge is increased and curatorial confidence grows.

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[104] ibid, 2
[105] City Council (Museums), *Annual Benchmarking Report 2002/03*, 38
[106] ibid

An invaluable supporting role throughout the preparatory stages of this paper, helping to inform the discussion of many issues raised, has been played by Vivien Hamilton, Glasgow Museums' Research Manager for Art. Reflecting her curatorial background, Hamilton has repeatedly expressed the belief that good collections based-knowledge is intrinsic to the running of a successful museum and she is enthusiastic about the research potential of the collection. However, during an interview conducted for the purpose of this paper, when asked how the creation of Major Projects and Research had impacted on the museums service to date Hamilton was quick to express her frustration that the impact had thus far been minimal[107]. Having described how meetings had been carried out early in the department's history with the aim of informally identifying individual research interests of specialist curators, she in turn expressed regret that follow-up meetings to shape these interests and give direction to research have not thus far been possible. With the Kelvingrove New Century Project still on-going, the time and energy of the recently appointed Research Managers have been largely diverted into management roles serving this project, thereby preventing the remit of Major Projects and Research from being fully enacted. Assurances have been given, however, that a similar degree of management involvement in a single project will not occur at this level again and Hamilton, together with her colleagues, is keen to explore the wider parameters of her role as a Research Manager.

Although this inevitable preoccupation with Kelvingrove has prevented new research initiatives from progressing as swiftly as might otherwise have been anticipated, to a certain degree the Kelvingrove New Century Project has become a forum for new research in itself. As Kelvingrove's ambitious refurbishment programme demanded a complete overhaul of the exhibition spaces, curators were required to develop reinvigorated displays supported by existing and new knowledge. Consequently, it has been a Major Projects and Research priority to ensure that all new information is gathered and recorded in both object files and through attachment to relevant records in the collections database, Multi MIMSY. Maximising the research benefits of the Kelvingrove New Century Project is an example of how the Research Managers are taking

[107] Interview with Vivien Hamilton, Research Manager for Art, Major Projects and Research, Glasgow Museums Service, Glasgow City Council, August 2004

fundamental responsibility for collections-based knowledge, securing its continued availability to both internal and external researchers and reversing a previous pattern of lost information.

Despite early dissatisfaction with the direction that Major Projects and Research has taken to date within Glasgow Museums, Hamilton remains realistic about the achievability of the targets detailed in her job description. While many collections-based research possibilities certainly exist, commencing multiple projects simultaneously is not physically possible. Dependent on adequate resources, including staff, money and time, projects must be carefully planned if they are to be successfully managed. Hamilton was emphatic in her assertion that fully utilising the collection as a resource for research would essentially be dependent upon a good command of its content. For this reason, enhanced documentation programmes have been prioritised by Major Projects and Research, together with Collections Management, in an attempt to generate a thorough record of all objects in the collection, the main priority within this being the verification of basic catalogue information.

Having retained curatorial responsibility for the French paintings in the museum collection, Hamilton is conceivably in a position to lead collections-based research by example. Perceiving her role of Research Manager as one of support and supervision, she acknowledges the existing professional expertise of Glasgow Museums' curators, encouraging skills development rather than dictating practice. This challenge of achieving a balance between appropriate supervision and involvement in research projects is one that will be crucial to the success of Major Projects and Research, helping to establish it as a significant department within the museums service. The positive outcome of the *Best Value Review*, however, is offset by occasional persisting bad practice within the museums service; a key disparity referred to by Hamilton on more than one occasion. Quick to acknowledge that the achievability of the Best Value recommendations relied on successful implementation, she also expressed the concern that culture change within an institution is only possible with the full participation and support of all staff[108].

Foremost in the implementation of Glasgow Museums *Collections Management Five Year Plan* is *Spend to Save*, the Glasgow Museums inventory project. This project, as its title suggests,

[108] ibid

will provide the initial funding necessary to complete a basic inventory of the museum's collections. In turn, the museum will expect to save money in the long run as it benefits from increased collections-based knowledge. As a publicly funded organisation, Glasgow Museums has an extended responsibility to serve the public not only by ensuring access to its collections but also by demonstrating appropriate use of public monies. The success of *Spend to Save* would fulfil many of the demands made on the museum service by the governing local authority; increased accountability and improved decision making would in turn result in better public service. With potential savings estimated at £7million in staff time alone, this project is a crucial step in improving the management of the Glasgow collections. The inventory process will see a return to fundamental documentation standards: identifying and describing objects, measuring, marking, recording location and establishing their legal status. Finally, existing documentation will be matched to new information and full records will be centralised on the CMS, ready for immediate access.

As rapid access to collections will be made possible only by knowing the collection content and knowing where objects are stored the initial stages of *Spend to Save* deal with the issues listed above. When these basic concerns are dealt with objects will then be matched to all existing relevant records including current database entry, acquisition and loan records. Any objects identified as of unknown status will be given a temporary register number, pending further investigation. Catalogue entries will be improved, describing more accurately and fully each object to make identification easier. In recording data, object descriptions and referencing will adhere to standardised Getty object ID. Additional funds raised to achieve the goals of *Spend to Save* will allow the collections management staff to employ additional designated inventory staff and increase access to Multi MIMSY. In order to enhance catalogue information and aid the description of any unidentified objects, liaison between project staff and curators will be a key factor, thereby ensuring the successful completion of the project.

Further benefits will stem from improved documentation and centralising information on the CMS. Money will be saved on staff time by guaranteeing that essential information about an object is available on the database, removing the need for an object to be physically found and examined. Similarly, dependability of information on the CMS will make it possible to answer public enquiries

more quickly and effectively. Computerised access to reliable information about the collection means that collections-management staff will be able to manipulate information in order to provide accurate statistical analysis of the collection. Photography expenditure has been accounted for also and attaching photographs of objects to relevant files will be a fundamental factor in the promotion of access and usability. Taking computerised access one step further and making the collections-management system available through the World Wide Web will ensure the provision of a research tool that promotes the collection on-line, dramatically impacting on public access.

Glasgow Museums freely acknowledge that establishing the full content of its collections is the primary purpose of *Spend to Save*. Only when the inventory has identified up-to-date locations for objects will it be possible to make logical decisions to streamline storage. When this has been achieved the secondary phase of the project will consider how best to permit greater access to collections, with digitisation inevitably being a central issue. Deciding on the format that any digitised collections database will follow has already been the subject of much debate and hopes are that some degree of digital access to collections will be possible in time to coincide with the re-opening of Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery.

6. Glasgow Museums Case Study: Part 2

Collections-based research, fitting the stereotype of an under-funded local authority museum, has not been considered a priority in the more recent history of Glasgow Museums. Neglected in favour of activities that more visibly demonstrated public service, curatorial research dramatically deteriorated, leading to a situation where knowledge about objects remained static in various areas. Although many of the Italian art works in the collection of Glasgow Museums are of international importance the only catalogue dedicated wholly to this part of the collection was published in 1970. Planned as a two-volume edition with text and plates published separately, only the illustrated volume was printed; for reasons unknown the text volume did not make publication, with the result that the most up-to-date resource available for these works is a collection of predominantly black and white plates accompanied only by basic catalogue information. Apologies are made in both the foreword and introduction to the catalogue, promising that the newly revised text volume will be available soon. While reasons for its failure to materialise remain unclear, it is obvious from enquiries conducted for the purpose of this paper, together with the object files for each work, that extensive research and preparation went into reviewing the entire Italian art collection. 'A major problem was, and still is, the question of attributions. 74 of the pictures have been re-attributed and, although I have placed a question mark after an artist's name in only two cases, in fact several more pictures are under review. '[109] In writing the introduction to the catalogue of illustrations George Buchanan, then Curator of the Department of Art, goes on to anticipate the text volume where such issues as attribution shall be discussed in full. Also, references are made to the international experts whom he contacted for opinions related to attribution, artist's school and dates. His findings, however, are confined to handwritten notes and those letters that survived to be included in the object files. Final full text drafts for each of the catalogue entries are apparently lost, or did not exist.

Beyond this situation of discontinued research, a further difficulty faced by Glasgow Museums in facilitating intellectual access to the Italian art collection involves the collections information stored on the CMS, Multi MIMSY. It was not until the early 1990s that a SMC grant

[109] George Buchanan, *Catalogue of Italian paintings with which is included a small group of Spanish pictures, illustrations*, Art Gallery and Museum, 1970, Glasgow, 7

made it possible for Glasgow's museums service to adopt a computerised catalogue system. Previously, all object information had been paper-based; registers were indexed to provide information by location, subject and accession number but this method only permitted very limited access to the collections. To date, Multi MIMSY has been used by Glasgow Museums as their central CMS for only three years so the potential it represents for increased access has not yet been fully exploited. Ultimately, the aim of the collections management team is to use the data held on Multi MIMSY as the foundation for a public access system, but preparation of such a system is still in its early stages. A chief concern is ensuring the suitability of available information, keeping security-sensitive information isolated from more general collections information. In addition, decisions concerning how the collection will be presented through such a facility and the level of access that will be granted are still to be made. Core to all the difficulties faced before full remote public access is feasible, however, is the need to edit and update the collections information currently contained on Multi MIMSY.

Curators were not involved in the process of physically inputting collections information on Multi MIMSY: for practicality and speed documentation staff carried out this task, relying on the acquisition registers rather than individual object files as their primary source of information. This system gave rise to a situation where amendments made to object files were overlooked, allowing outdated information to be recorded in the newly computerised catalogue files. Without returning to the object files and re-assessing all available information for each individual work it will not be possible to rectify this situation. In order to make remote public access a reality, curatorial input must be sought to edit and revise each database entry if the desired standards of content accuracy are to be met.

In dealing with the Italian paintings it quickly became apparent that much of Buchanan's research, covering a period from the 1950s through to the early 1970s, could be traced by piecing together hand-written notes still included in the files that contained valuable observations, each one contributing to a fuller impression of the work through artist attribution, influence, date and known provenance. Unfortunately resources including time and staffing levels mean that the exercise undertaken for the purpose of this paper remains a luxury within most institutions. Conversely,

however, it must also be considered a necessity if such institutions are to maximise the learning and access potential of their collections, a principal concern of all museums.

The object files that correspond to each of the paintings in the Italian art collection of Glasgow museums are still the most useful information resource available. Comprised of a record card detailing basic catalogue information from artist, title and register number to provenance, exhibition history and literature, the files are then enhanced with photographs, related press clippings, journal articles, correspondence and other relevant materials that contribute to an overall history of each object (Illustrations 1-8). Despite being the primary reference point for each work, however, the record cards do not have guaranteed reliability. Years of amendments are often visible in scored-through notes including over-written titles, attributions and dates. Ascertaining which reference is most reliable is made more difficult by an almost universal failure to note the date that each opinion change was recorded. Further to this, the loose-leaf notes in each file contain a multitude of unexplored references and possible links that could lead to a better understanding of the work. Extracting the correct or most recent information from these cards was the starting point in laying a foundation of enhanced documentation that could ultimately support a scholarly catalogue and the privilege of full and frequent access to the object files for all the Italian paintings made this case study possible. Increasing intellectual access to this part of the collection, and eventually the wider collection, will rely on an on-going programme of information enhancement that will feed into the CMS, in turn being made available on-line and serving as the skeleton for published catalogues.

In April 2003 *Collecting Italian Old Master Paintings in Scotland*, a Scottish Society for Art History conference, was held at the University of St Andrews. A number of papers were delivered, exploring important Scottish collections as well as themes and issues related to the Scottish collecting culture. At this conference Hamilton, Glasgow Museums' Research Manager for Art, spoke on the subject of *Italian Old Masters in Glasgow: Resources for Research*. By publicising the importance of Glasgow's collection through the conference, in particular those paintings bequeathed by Archibald McLellan that became the foundation of Glasgow's civic collection, Hamilton was able to raise awareness of the collection and its untapped potential as a resource for art historical research. In her paper, referring to the findings of the *Best Value Review*, she talked

about the newly emerging research culture within Glasgow Museums and the attempts being made to stimulate research and encourage access to the collections-based resources within the museum. The importance of building new knowledge upon a strong foundation was reiterated.

> 'We [Major Projects and Research] recognise that authoritative knowledge is the bedrock that should underpin all aspects of our service delivery; that we must be a reliable source of information and a responsible guardian of the history of our collections; and that we have to understand our collections in order to best preserve and improve them. '[110]

Major Projects and Research are clearly realistic about the need to raise the standard of basic catalogue information in their object records if their aim of responsible guardianship is to be fulfilled. This project is a practical example of how simple improvements to documentation can enrich the usability of a collection, releasing its potential as a valid research resource.

Carrying out this project relied on two principal documentation guidelines that informed information standards, *SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard* and the Getty Information Institute *Introduction to Object ID: Guidelines for making records that describe art, antiques and antiquities*[111]. Published by the mda, *SPECTRUM,* together with relevant fact sheets available from the mda web-site, served as a constructive tool in developing a systematic cataloguing approach. In defining and describing the minimum standards of cataloguing, *SPECTRUM* refers to key issues addressed by this case study and throughout this paper. In particular, it describes the need in museums to update frequently documentation records, supporting their content with additional collections-management information as it becomes available, such as loan or exhibition records, in order to facilitate access. The *SPECTRUM* definition of cataloguing is given as:

> 'The compilation and maintenance of primary information describing, formally identifying or otherwise relating to objects in the collection. Catalogue information can be created and maintained by way of one or both of the following:
>
> - Documenting the continuing assessment of, and research into, an object and its contexts.
> - The provision of access to collection management documentation, e.g. loans, acquisition and conservation. '[112]

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[110] Vivien Hamilton, 'Italian Old Masters in Glasgow: Resources for Research', *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History*, Vol. 8, 2003, 88

[111] Robin Thornes, with Peter Dorrell, Henry Lie, *Introduction to Object ID: Guidelines for making records that describe art, antiques and antiquities*, Getty Information Institute, 1999

[112] Cowton (ed), *SPECTRUM*, ch.6, 1

Although the first of these two points is now established good practice within Glasgow Museums, information disparities between catalogue records on the CMS and information in the object files still prohibit full access to the museum's collection. The advantage of the CMS over the object files is that they provide some degree of rapid access to the collections, at present only internally, when it may not be possible to visit physically the object files. Knowing the limitations of both the CMS and the object files before commencement of this project meant that it was possible to consider the *SPECTRUM* definition of cataloguing, together with its minimum standards, when considering how the creation of an up-to-date draft catalogue of the Italian paintings should be approached.

'Cataloguing information should provide:

- A level of description sufficient to identify an object and its differences from other, like objects.
- An historic archive relating to an object.
- A reference system for use by the public, staff, researchers and the media. '[113]

Recognising the vital role that object files must play within any institution, the purpose of this project has never been to replace object files. Instead, the intention has been to provide the museum with an accessible and usable front-line resource until such time that the newly collated information in the draft catalogue entries can be used to update Multi MIMSY, providing a more reliable and accurate database service. It should be recognised, however, that once this is achieved the object files must continue to play a vital supporting role in enhancing collections-based research by detailing, through letters and articles, the rich history of each object. While such physical records may be referred to only on the CMS, knowledge of this information will at least be available and access to it will finally be possible through better use of the database.

Proposed initially as a resource for helping to combat art theft and the illicit trade of stolen artefacts, the success of the Getty Object ID project relied on establishing a usable documentation standard that would, in the event of a theft, secure instant access to accurate information about objects in collections. The need for such a standard grew from increasing difficulties in recovering stolen objects or, in the event of recovery, returning them to their rightful owners. Occasions where documentation was insufficient or inaccurate meant that it was not possible to guarantee that those objects would be recognised as previously belonging to a particular institution, with the result that establishing provenance was often impossible. Improving this situation through the provision of a

fundamental documentation standard is again an example of how intellectual access to collections can be achieved through improved documentation, albeit for a slightly different primary purpose. This does not, however, undermine the relevance of Object ID to this project. Although many institutions throughout the world already adhere to comprehensive documentation standards, as it is internationally implemented Object ID has increased the awareness of the need for good documentation. It is certainly worth considering such a standard, therefore, as a supporting means by which to further secure intellectual access to Glasgow Museums' collections.

In addition to the Getty Object ID standards, this case-study was also informed by reference to two of the Getty Vocabularies: The Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and the Union List of Artist Names (ULAN). Two of the research tools developed and maintained by the Getty, both these information authorities can be used in the cataloguing of objects to ensure up to date, accurate records.

> 'The Getty vocabularies can be used in three ways: at the data entry stage, by cataloguers or indexers who are describing works of art, architecture, material culture, archival materials, visual surrogates, or bibliographic materials; as knowledge bases, providing information for researchers; and as search assistants to enhance end-user access to online resources. '[114]

Already linked to Multi MIMSY, the AAT is the information authority against which all entered category details are checked to ensure compliance and, therefore, consistency. The ULAN is a resource for checking accepted spellings of artist names, their dates and origins. It is also a useful tool in exploring the background and familial history of artists, throwing up information that serves to create useful biographies of artists, possibly leading to a better understanding of their work. In instances where inconsistencies occurred in the recording of artist names between object file, record card and Multi MIMSY, the ULAN served as a reliable point of reference by which such issues could be resolved. The relevant listing for each of the artists represented in the Glasgow collection was printed out from the Getty web pages for inclusion in each object file, thereby strengthening the biographical records held for each of the artists and resolving variations. [115]

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[113] ibid

[114] http://www.getty.edu, Getty Vocabulary Programme, Research at the Getty

[115] In May 2004 *Cataloguing Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and their Images* was made available on-line in draft format. Prepared by the Visual Resources Association (VRA), this data standard has been developed to work alongside the existing Getty Authorities. *Cataloguing Cultural Objects* will provide standards for data content. 'Until now, there has been little published documentation on data content standards applicable to cultural objects . . . Building upon existing standards, *Cataloguing*

Through discussions with both Hamilton and Patricia Collins, Curator of Medieval and Renaissance Art at Glasgow Museums, the parameters of this project were defined and in September 2003 an enhanced documentation programme of the Italian art collection of Glasgow Museums commenced. The first stage was a visit to the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre to assess the existing object files for each painting and decide how information would be extracted from these files to be summarised in new draft catalogue entries. Having considered the time available and the level of information required for each work, it was felt that it would be possible to create a draft catalogue entry for every Italian painting in the collection. Closely following the structure of the existing paper-based record cards, the information recorded for each work was divided into key areas. At first drafted by hand, the updated records were then typed before being subjected to rigorous and repeated editing. Each new version of any one entry was kept and filed, both minor and major mistakes and discrepancies being recorded on a paper trail that in itself became a valuable resource. Central to ensuring the successful creation of a comprehensive and reliable record of this part of Glasgow's collection was the importance placed on consistency; systematically recording facts and figures and applying a standardised approach ultimately guaranteed delivery of complete and usable documents. The next stage of this programme of documentation enhancement will be the transference of these records onto Multi MIMSY.

Focusing on the eventual aim of increasing intellectual access to the collection, it was necessary to record not only the established facts about each work, but also any queries and discrepancies in the object records that needed to be checked and verified. The possibility that details might be omitted in transcribing information from the original record to the new draft is a very real concern. Like removing a link from a chain, overlooking a crucial fact about the object may disrupt a potential pattern of research. Lists were created that simultaneously documented each question as it occurred, with the intention to review major issues with the curator, as time allowed. Although this was not possible within the time-scale of the project, these lists now exist as a useful accompaniment to each draft catalogue entry. By establishing primary issues that require attention, for example whether dimensions listed are for the framed or unframed canvas, a starting

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Cultural Objects provides guidelines for selecting, ordering, and formatting data used to populate elements in a catalogue record; this manual is designed to promote good descriptive cataloguing, shared documentation, and enhanced end-user access.' www.vraweb.org/CCO/aboutcco

point has been established for the creation of a scholarly catalogue and potential resource for research.

During the cataloguing process it was impossible not to be side-tracked by the wealth of documents contained in the object files that accompanied many of the Italian paintings in Glasgow's collection. At times this became a frustrating aspect of the cataloguing project as the nature of the object files as a truly untapped resource for collections-based research became clear, but time did not allow each possible source to be pursued. Through letters and published articles the cross-over between museums and the art history community was clearly demonstrated. One of the objectives outlined in the *Best Value Review* advocates the forging of relationships between Glasgow Museums and similar institutions that could potentially support the work of various museum departments. By once more considering the Italian art research carried out by Buchanan from the mid 20th century onwards, it is obvious that he already relied on such a network of both institutions and individuals, all of whom held an interest related to Glasgow's collection. This is a notable contrast between past and present practice, giving an insight into how collections-based knowledge of the Italian paintings has declined within the museum service in recent years. Without the driving force of Buchanan's personal contacts, external interest in the collection suffered. A key factor in achieving the involvement of international experts in the preparation of the 1970 catalogue was the promise of a complimentary or discounted copy of both catalogue volumes, as an acknowledgement of help or information received. This practice, fulfilled in part in many instances with the forwarding of the published illustrated volume of the catalogue, would also have been a means by which information about the collection could be disseminated throughout the academic art history community, thereby inviting further examination of the works, promoting the collection as a resource for research. It is therefore ironic that research on the Italian paintings has essentially come full circle, once more requiring extensive and in-depth study to re-establish its position as an internationally important representation of Italian art. Being able to disseminate basic catalogue information about these works through digital media, however, would serve as a useful stepping-stone to the publication of a fully updated scholarly catalogue.

Various factors inevitably contributed to this decline in collections-based knowledge about Glasgow's Italian paintings, but foremost is the loss to the museum staff of Buchanan. In the

'ivory-tower' tradition of art curators pursuing individual areas of research, Buchanan clearly had a deep personal enthusiasm for Italian art, but in contrast to the negative implications of this, by setting his sights on the publication of a comprehensively researched catalogue Buchanan combined personal with professional expertise. Although his painstaking catalogue preparation did not come to fruition, it was achieved in part through the publication of the illustrated volume. Unfortunately, the core text of the catalogue remains scattered between each object file, recorded only on paper and substantially in handwritten notes. Early examination of the object files quickly established the most fruitful source of information therein as the reverse side of black and white photographs, one for each particular work in question (Illustration 9).

In minute script, Buchanan recorded all his findings and sources of information, keeping a record of correspondence, literature references and opinions expressed as well as his own ideas and avenues of research still to be pursued. A fascinating habit, in reality these notes are an invaluable record of how one scholar served to establish a history for each work, achieving a better understanding of the collection. In order to make this into a usable resource it was necessary to make transcripts of the notes on the reverse of each photograph, deciphering them word by word and learning to recognise symbols, abbreviations and common references. Few members of staff still employed by Glasgow Museums worked with Buchanan, although Hugh Stevenson, current curator of British Art 1600-1970, does remember him. Able to offer advice on deciphering Buchanan's handwriting, Stevenson also explained Buchanan's care in recording particularly important titles, attributions or possible sources of information. Writing with a fountain pen, Buchanan would turn the nib so that the ink ran less freely, writing with cleaner and clearer lines to ensure the legibility of his text. Whether this was to highlight details for personal purpose or to ensure that the words were readable to others, it does demonstrate an awareness of the importance of creating a reliable research record, anticipating the *SPECTRUM* standards of documenting research that will contribute to an historic archive for an object.

Further to this, Buchanan was also meticulous in ensuring that all correspondence received by, or sent from the museum regarding paintings in the collection was copied to the appropriate object file. Again, this forms a remarkable archive record of how current opinion of each painting was shaped and which scholars were responsible for influencing or confirming

attribution changes. As yet, how these letters should be documented has not been resolved, although awareness of them has been raised through this documentation project. Creating and attaching an index of all letters in each object file to the relevant Multi MIMSY record would be an ideal situation, but was certainly not achievable within the parameters of this project and, having considered the extended need for enhanced documentation across Glasgow Museums' collection, it cannot be considered a priority.

One aspect of this documentation project that proved particularly rewarding has been the attempt to create an up-to-date concordance of artist attributions for each of the Italian paintings. For the purpose of this project only previous catalogue references were used as the primary resource, although in an ideal situation every recorded attribution would be included. As has been mentioned, a designated catalogue of the Italian paintings in Glasgow Museums has not been published since 1970. Prior to this, however, catalogues representative of the entire fine art collection of the museum were published, dating from the mid-nineteenth-century. Beginning with the McLellan catalogue, a record of the works from Archibald McLellan's private collection that formed the basis of Glasgow's civic collection, and progressing year by year through the publishing history of the institution, it has been possible to begin the process of documenting attribution changes as they occurred. Often, this involved the cross-referencing of more than one catalogue, considering the recorded measurements and description of a particular work in order to establish its past history within the collection. Each established catalogue reference was recorded in the relevant draft catalogue entry, detailing the fact that the work had previously been listed 'as by' another artist, giving this artist's name, dates and school. Recording the relevant reference from old collection catalogues in the object files of the Italian paintings is not something that had been done before, but by making certain that they were referenced on the draft catalogue entries as each work was processed made this concordance table possible.

An invaluable tool in describing when and by whom attributions were altered, this concordance represents another fundamental step in realising a comprehensive documentation record. If changes to attribution or title are not efficiently recorded for any one painting it becomes harder to identify the past provenance of that particular work. Once more, good records are central to guaranteeing the usability of a collection and, in the future, this concordance could potentially be

used to illustrate better the history of a painting, or to contribute to a reattribution. Including the relevant references to each work within the literature field of the appropriate draft catalogue entry enhances the importance of these records as a frontline resource. Awareness is raised of additional resources within the museum archives and library that could serve to aid further scholarly research, providing essential background information. In addition, although now considered in many ways to be out of date, these old catalogues are a crucial resource in helping to establish facts relating to the history of a painting and its provenance. As such, the catalogues themselves become an important factor in supporting the on-going documentation of the collection, as well as collections-based research.

Despite an over-riding impression of neglected research, some serious scholarship has recently been undertaken on a selection of Glasgow's Italian paintings, in preparation for loan. Coinciding with the completion of the Playfair Project,[116] the National Gallery, Edinburgh opened its latest blockbuster exhibition *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections* on 5 August, 2004. Eight Italian paintings from Glasgow Museums were lent in support of this exhibition and research for the accompanying catalogue was carried out in part by Professor Peter Humfrey, University of St Andrews. Involved in curating this exhibition, Humfrey contributed two introductory essays, as well as the catalogue entries for each of the paintings, to the finished catalogue. When compared with the information included in the corresponding draft catalogue records of those paintings lent by Glasgow, the scholarly weight of the National Gallery publication demonstrates emphatically how collections-based research can be realised.

Concentrating on four paintings from the Glasgow collection that are broadly representative of the current state of collections-research and the potential for its advancement, it is interesting to assess how knowledge of each of these works has developed as a result of their inclusion in the National Gallery's Venetian art exhibition. Beginning with Giovanni Bellini's *The Virgin and Child*[117] Humfrey cites a previous lack of research into the background of this painting

[116] The Playfair Project comprised the refurbishment of the Royal Scottish Academy (RSA) building on the Mound in Edinburgh and the construction of the Weston Link (previously the Playfair Link), an underground walkway connecting the RSA and National Gallery buildings. www.nationalgalleries.org
[117] Glasgow Museums: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, n.575, Peter Humfrey, Timothy Clifford, Aidan Weston-Lewis, Michael Bury, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, exh. cat., National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2004, n.3

as a contributing factor in hampering its acceptance as a work by the Italian master. 'This picture has not been widely discussed in the art-historical literature, a neglect that perhaps reflects doubts on its autograph status, and probably also the fact that it has not been seen outside Glasgow since it was acquired by John Graham-Gilbert in the mid-nineteenth century. '[118] From the draft catalogue entry for this work it is apparent that early Glasgow Corporation catalogues gave this painting to Carlo Dolci and later School of Bellini before it was apparently accepted as by Giovanni Bellini at the turn of the nineteenth century. All subsequent catalogues, including the 1970 Glasgow catalogue, recorded this work as by Bellini, although its current title of *Madonna and Child* was altered to *The Madonna with the Child Blessing* in the 1970 catalogue[119] and, more recently, *The Virgin and Child*[120] in the National Gallery catalogue. While the disparities in these titles are not huge, they do demonstrate the need to form a comprehensive record of a work if it is to be successfully described and its provenance traced through the history of collections and collectors. Inclusion in *The Age of Titian*, an internationally important exhibition, elevates the status of this work, guaranteeing it a wide audience (Appendix A, Illustrations 10 & 14).

More controversially, recorded in the draft catalogue as Attributed to Giorgio de Castelfranco, called Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*[121] is unequivocally one of the most important Italian paintings in Glasgow's collection. In the National Gallery exhibition catalogue this work is listed as *Christ and the Adulteress* by Titian. 'A minority of scholars has always been unhappy with the attribution to Giorgione, and in the decades around 1900 some alternative names were suggested, including those of Sebastiano del Piombo, Domenico Campagnola, Cariani, Romanino and Titian. Of these, only the last has persisted and is now prevalent. '[122] Much research was undertaken and debate conducted before this attribution change was made, but it is interesting that the object files in Glasgow do not reflect this monumental change. Although Glasgow Museums approved the change, information regarding this work remains filed under Giorgione and the draft catalogue entry reflects this. This is a fundamental example of how the primary resources for research within Glasgow Museums could potentially

[118] Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titian*, exh. cat., 62
[119] George Buchanan, *Catalogue of Italian paintings,* 34, repr. bw, n.575
[120] Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titian*, exh. cat., 62
[121] Glasgow Museums: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, n.181, Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titians*, exh. cat., n.13
[122] Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titians*, exh. cat., 80

remain inaccessible and ineffective. Returning once more to the idea of archiving a history of an object, if the object files for each painting are not kept up to date then they will not be able to serve as the foundation upon which collections-based research will be built.

Another more positive aspect of the National Gallery's Titian catalogue entry, however, is the provenance history listed for the work. The most up-to-date information held by Glasgow on the provenance of this picture still lists the work in question as previously having been part of the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden in 1689. Humfrey's research has disproved this theory, identifying essential differences between Glasgow's painting and the description of the work in the Swedish collection. Central to this is the fact that an attribution of the Glasgow work to Giorgione only occurred in the nineteenth-century, until which time it had been attributed to Bonifacio de'Pitati. The painting listed in the collection of Queen Christina was already given to Giorgione by the seventeenth century. 'Any mention of it, therefore, in seventeenth-and-eighteenth-century inventories is more likely to be under the name of Bonifacio than of Giorgione. '[123] These findings may yet prove to be pivotal in determining the earlier provenance of the Glasgow work and the potential for further research into this part of the collection is huge. The groundwork done by Humfrey in his work for the National Gallery catalogue contributes to the authoritative 'bedrock' of knowledge referred to by Hamilton in her paper of 2003 (Appendix B, Illustrations 11 & 15).

Issues of attribution have been explored for both the aforementioned works, but subject-matter has remained largely undisputed. In contrast, *The Ordeal of Tuccia*[124] by the Workshop of Jacopo Tintoretto has been the subject of various interpretations, in relation to both subject-matter and artist attribution. Part of Archibald McLellan's bequest of 1854, since entering the collection this small canvas has been attributed to Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, Jacopo Tintoretto and in 1996 to Lambert Sustris, before Humfrey's most recent attribution in his National Gallery catalogue entry to the Workshop of Jacopo Tintoretto. The subject of the painting has also been varyingly described as *The Daughter of Herodias* or *Salome going for John the Baptist's head* until the title of *The Ordeal of Tuccia* was adopted, certainly by the mid 1930s. The central image depicted is of a female figure in the foreground, carrying in her arms an almost flat dish. She

[123] ibid, 82
[124] Glasgow Museums: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, n.189, Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titians*, exh. cat., n.51

appears to be in a hurry and two further female figures gesture as she passes. In the background, a group of male figures sit or stand in front of a classical ruin. An interpretation of the dish carried by the central figure as a plate gave rise to the earlier titles for this work: Salome, whose mother Herodias ordered the be-heading of St John the Baptist, was presented with the Baptist's head before carrying it to her mother on a charger, or large dish. It is now agreed, however, that the central figure is in fact the Vestal Virgin Tuccia. Her title refers to her position as a virgin priestess in the temple of the Goddess Vesta in ancient Rome. When her chastity was questioned following an accusation of adultery, Tuccia undertook to carry a sieve full of water from the river Tiber back to the temple of Vesta to prove her virginity and innocence. The large dish carried by the female figure in this work is therefore now accepted as a sieve, rather than a charger or plate.

As with the majority of the works bequeathed to the city of Glasgow by McLellan, the known provenance of this work did not stretch before 1855. The catalogue entry given in the National Gallery, however, refers to a possible reference to the painting in the collection of the Countess of Arundel in the seventeenth-century. 'Although there is no certain record of the picture before it was recorded in the McLellan bequest in 1855, it is possibly identical with one described as showing a 'Roman Woman carrying water to the Tiber' by Tintoretto in the inventory of the Countess of Arundel in Amsterdam in 1654. '[125] Again, an interesting suggestion has been made by Humfrey that enriches the history of the work. Recording provenance history is an essential requirement of good documentation and, although information of this kind is scarce in relation to most of the Italian works in the Glasgow collection, by continuing to promote the collection as an art historical resource and inviting scholarly interest it is possible that this situation will be further improved. Any knowledge that exists on the origins of a particular work, or the collections through which it may have passed, is an additional resource for research (Appendix C, Illustrations 12 & 16).

A more recent addition to the collection, presented to Glasgow Museums in 1948 by Mrs John G. Coats, is *The Virgin and Child*[126], now attributed to Domenico Capriolo. The 1970 catalogue gives this work to a Follower of Palma Vecchio, describing it as *The Madonna and Child.*

[125] Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titian*, exh. cat., 154
[126] Glasgow Museums: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, n.3182, Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titians*, exh. cat., n.21

The draft catalogue entry for this work lists no provenance beyond 1948 and, in addition to the 1970 catalogue reference, only one other literature reference is made; the article in question carries an attribution to Pordenone. In his summary of this work in the National Gallery catalogue Humfrey mentions an attribution to Capriolo that was first made in 1983 and which he believes most appropriate to the work. As such, this is the attribution under which the work is currently displayed in the *Age of Titian*. It is not, however, the attribution under which the work is recorded in either the object files of Glasgow Museums or on the CMS, Multi MIMSY (Appendix D, Illustrations 13 & 17).

As the primary information resource in creating the draft catalogue entry for these works was the object file, together with the brief 1970 catalogue reference, the current opinion within the museum should certainly be reflected in the most up-to-date records. Although the curator at present responsible for the Italian paintings is undoubtedly fully aware of the new information being presented to the art history community through the publication of the National Gallery catalogue, an inherent responsibility also exists to ensure that this information is equally available within the museum itself. The ethos behind the creation of a department such as Major Projects and Research and the opening of the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre is to invite external interest in the collection, providing a facility that will support research. If internal knowledge is not disseminated through all the appropriate channels, in this case specifically the object file for the works concerned and through notification to the documentation staff of changes that have occurred in terms of attribution and/or title, then the usefulness of a resource centre is compromised and any attempt to establish the collection as a resource for research is undermined.

Filed in alphabetical order by artist surname or popular name the likelihood of the object files being mis-filed and lost within the filing system is high. Taking the example once more of those works being displayed in Edinburgh, whose attributions have been altered following Humfrey's research, any request made to Glasgow Museums for further information about these works would most likely be done under their current attribution. Although the Titian/Giorgione work is of such renown that regardless of attribution its file will undoubtedly be readily available, for those lesser-known works only now being brought to wider public attention an immediate link between current and previous attribution is less likely. Further to this, in instances where an artist's

name is recorded, followed by a nickname he or she is 'known as', a difficulty arises as to which of these titles the object file should be sorted by. *The Ordeal of Tuccia* could equally be filed under Jacopo Robusti or Jacopo Tintoretto. Tintoretto's popular name refers to the profession of his father, who was a dyer and has come to be the artist's familiar title[127]. Enquiries after works by Tintoretto or Robusti would rely on the knowledge of the curator to identify both artists as one and the same. If the Resource Centre is to be widely used and accessible curatorial supervision of all research enquiries and activities will not be feasible; what might be considered as a trivial referencing objection could potentially impede access to the required information.

It should be made clear, however, that this is not a new problem. When Buchanan carried out his research in preparation for the 1970 catalogue he too was guilty of altering attribution, but not altering the alphabetical order of the corresponding object-file. While this oversight has been brought to light as a result of this practical project, without cross-referencing the 1970 catalogue entries with older catalogue editions detailing the entire fine art collection it would have been very difficult to successfully identify which works the 1970 catalogue referred to. Simple occasions whereby a work filed as 'unknown' has been re-attributed as 'Venetian' gave rise to time-consuming difficulties.

What has not changed for any of those works re-attributed is the register number that it was given when accessioned. Fine Art in Glasgow Museums has traditionally been accessioned in numerical sequence. A system of running numbers, adopted when the first bequests formed the basis of the collection, is still used today. Jane Raftery, Assistant Collections Manager, Documentation in Glasgow Museums explained in discussion that different parts of the collections, throughout previous years, have been accessioned according to different systems, but that each system is now maintained and consistently applied to its relevant collection. The benefit of altering this system in order to apply a consistent approach across the entire collection is out-weighed by the resources of staff, funding and time necessary to implement such a change. As the accession numbers for the Italian art collection will inevitably continue to follow this order of running numbers in the future, adopting numerical sequence, rather than alphabetical order, might prove to be a

[127] 'Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti) (1518-94). Venetian painter. His nickname derives from his father's profession of dyer (*tintore*).' Ian Chilvers (ed), Harold Osborne (ed), Dennis Farr (ed), *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, Oxford, New York, 1994

more viable filing system. The Glasgow Museums register numbers for each of the works on display in *The Age of Titian* are referenced both on the National Gallery labels and in the catalogue. If an enquiry after a work by Titian was made using the register number and it was possible to locate the file by searching running numbers, then a failure to update the artist reference on the Giorgione object file would be less of an issue. The same problem of searching by artist name applies to use of Multi MIMSY, but so too does the same solution. Searches by register number will pull up only the record requested: searching for a work currently attributed to an artist different from the one detailed in the catalogue record will not return the required information.

Clearly, Glasgow Museums is at present demonstrating a serious ambition to fulfil the objectives outlined by the *Best Value Review*, not least through the aims of the newly defined Collections Management department and the remit of Major Projects and Research. The difficulties it faces in achieving this ambition, however, cannot be ignored. While the re-structuring of the museums service has been applauded as a success, there are still many unresolved issues that are impeding progress in re-establishing the collection at the heart of the service. The potential of Glasgow Museums Resource Centre as a base for research is limited by issues as fundamental as adequate desk provision. Far more serious is the disordered state of the museum library, access to books, documents, manuscripts and the extensive archive remains limited to ineffectual rummaging or chance finds. Although a librarian has been employed to oversee the reorganisation of the library into a usable resource, insufficient staffing means that progress is slow.

A facility such as Glasgow's Resource Centre is a real asset to any museum service, but its usability has thus far been limited. Lack of resources, despite the recent service restructure, mean that external researchers using the facility cannot be efficiently supervised by staff. The museum has a responsibility not only to the works themselves but also to the contents of the object files; the vulnerability of irreplaceable documents such as letters must be actively protected. Poorly maintained, the physical state of the Italian art object files is deteriorating and this in turn affects file contents. As the records age they become more vulnerable and care must be taken to ensure the durability of what is essentially the core of the collection's history. Upon commencement of this project, it was suggested by Hamilton that a key aim in maintaining the object files would be their eventual transfer to archive-standard folders, creating better order and preventing further damage

to content. Allowing individuals frequent and unlimited access to these vulnerable files is at present not a realistic option. While moves are being made to establish digitised access to the museum collections through an on-line public access system, the paper-based resources that support such a system must not be overlooked as they will remain the primary point of reference for any information that is disseminated about the collection (Illustration 18).

Speed and efficiency have been central to the completion of this project, but as a volunteer and without access to a computer the support of the Major Projects and Research Administration Assistant, Sandra Gibbs, proved vital. Responsible for typing up all notes as each handwritten draft was submitted to her, she played a pivotal role in delivering the draft catalogue entries. It is possible, however, that more could have been achieved within the timeframe of this project if responsibility for typing had not been delegated. While it enforced rigorous editing, it also created problems as unfamiliar handwriting had to be transcribed and occasionally errors were made, causing a degree of frustration when omissions were recognised and had to be amended by hand, entry by entry, rather than being updated instantly via a computer. The documentation processes followed by the Collections Management staff invite comparable difficulties.

As curators do not have editorial access to Multi MIMSY they are unable to alter incorrect information independently. While it is their professional responsibility to ensure that the documentation staff are made aware of errors, there is potential for persistent breakdowns in communication. As a curator, being able to amend immediately an error or becoming detached from the problem by instructing someone else to resolve it could conceivably give rise to two very different situations; the former where the problem is easily resolved, the latter where it becomes protracted. Also, as preparation for putting the Glasgow collection on-line continues, more emphasis must inevitably be placed on accurate and up-to-date information. A public access system should reflect the knowledge of the curators, rather than that of the documentation staff, therefore more curatorial control should be justified and encouraged.

Undoubtedly, while some small practical successes have resulted from this project, it has achieved its main purpose of highlighting the urgent need for on-going documentation enhancement projects that will serve to promote potential areas of scholarly research within the

collection of Glasgow Museums. Also, if staff morale and inter-departmental co-operation could be improved, more clear-cut responsibility might give rise to increased efficiency and therefore better practice. A centrally available documentation policy that contained written guidelines for actioning changes to the CMS catalogue records, as well as gathering information to prevent loss, would enhance the object information held by Glasgow Museums, strengthening their relevance as a resource for continuing academic research. Pride in the collection and enthusiasm for what Glasgow Museums is striving to accomplish will be central to successfully achieving the long-term aims of the institution. Using Glasgow's Italian art collection as a focus for this case study does not lessen the importance of other parts of the organisation's diverse and expansive collections. The same lessons learned from this practical project will be applicable in many other instances and in other areas of the collection are already being acted upon. The art historical importance of the Italian paintings is already appreciated within the museum service, but only when this appreciation has extended to a much wider audience will Glasgow Museums be on its way to achieving its aim of becoming a research-led institution.

7. Comparisons: National Galleries of Scotland, Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow Museums

Whether defined by tradition or evolving through necessity, the three types of museum explored in the preceding chapters each deal with collections access and management in their own ways. What they do have in common, however, is the key priority of the collection as the core of their service. The National Galleries of Scotland, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery and Glasgow Museums all describe in their respective mission statements a desire to care for, enhance, augment, develop, use and allow access to their collections, but although their primary aims may be the same, within the museums sector they are each positioned very differently. The perceived prestige of national collections has traditionally shaped public, as well as professional opinion, raising expectations of accountability and service. Scholarship is inherent to the nature of the National Galleries and curators are presumed to be experts in their field. Similarly, within the wider environment of the University of Glasgow, the Hunterian feels pressure to assert its position as a museum working within an academic community. Expected to forge relationships with the schools of the university, the Hunterian is considered a source of support in furthering research in many fields, promoting the collection as a teaching tool. In contrast, Glasgow Museums is resisting its definition as a local authority museum. At present undergoing something of a renaissance, the museum service hopes to re-emerge after a period of restructuring and rebuilding as an institution of national, if not international, standing.

Throughout the UK, museum professionals have been steadily raising awareness of the impact that declining research has had on collections care and reports such as *Renaissance in the Regions* and *The National Audit* have proved this to be a nation-wide problem that must be addressed sooner rather than later. Key proposals from both these reports centre on better structuring of the museums sector and developing mutually beneficial working partnerships that will promote skills-sharing and better communication. In addition, by acknowledging the contribution of regional and independent museums to what is essentially a distributed national collection, improved support from national, university and other better-resourced institutions has been called for. An early response to this is exemplified by the National Gallery, London's provision of financial and practical support for the launch of the NIRP project. This initiative is already showing some

success and through the implementation of the Neil MacGregor scholarship scheme is instilling in newly qualified museum professionals fundamental cataloguing principles, leading to a better understanding of collections as resources for research while reaffirming the importance of collections-based research in many of the UK's regional museums.

Academic partners have been a major factor is ensuring the success of the NIRP project and this cross-over between museums and the art history community will continue to play a central role in an on-going improvement to museum scholarship. The National Galleries are already involved in supporting art history in the Universities of Edinburgh, St Andrews and Glasgow, together with Edinburgh College of Art, through involvement with the VARIE. Beyond this, the University of Glasgow benefits directly from the on-campus facility of the Hunterian and eventually Glasgow Museums, using the city collections, hopes to involve university students in research projects supervised by their Major Projects and Research department. There is no doubt that pro-active attitudes exist among individuals in each institution, with a desire to promote the usability of resources, but if the potential for supporting research is to be maximised it must become a central management policy. Certainly within Glasgow Museums more must be done to promote curatorial research if professional confidence is to be developed before Glasgow's collections are opened to external scholars. Excellent collections-based knowledge already exists in the National Galleries, but is an area that has unfortunately been neglected throughout the history of Glasgow's local authority management. It would be inaccurate, however, to imply that this neglect constituted a blanket failure, but past curatorial research in Glasgow Museums was often not recorded efficiently and is therefore now lost.

Moving away from academia, on a professional level *The Age of Titian* exhibition has been a recent example of partnership benefiting all three galleries, involving loaned works and shared expertise from both the Hunterian Art Gallery and Glasgow Museums to support the national collection in what is without doubt a truly international exhibition. Beyond this, however, concern was expressed by Buddle that the National Galleries might be inclined to fall into an 'imperialist trap'[128], running the risk of assuming that their help is desired or appreciated in smaller or less well

[128] Interview with Anne Buddle, Head of Exhibitions and Collections Management, National Galleries of Scotland, August 2004

equipped museums when this may not necessarily be the case. In order to make such a system continue to work effectively in the future, Buddle called for the introduction of a forum that would enable regional and independent curators and museum managers to describe the ways in which they felt that their museums would most benefit from external input or support. As partnership was criticised in particular by the *Best Value Review* of the National Galleries it is clearly an issue that they need to address[129]. In the meantime, Glasgow in particular benefited hugely from participation in *The Age of Titian* in terms of both conservation work carried out on loaned paintings and scholarship, although how this new knowledge will be used to strengthen current museum resources is not yet clear. If Glasgow realistically hopes to achieve international standards of collections care, then a commitment must be made to extend this beyond conservation, encompassing the preservation of information and knowledge as well.

The recent emergence of Collections Management as distinct departments within both the National Galleries and Glasgow Museums also invites comparisons of how such changes have affected each institution. Previously, within the National Galleries, collections management fell into the general remit of the Registrar's Department, but by describing it as a contained section within this larger department its workload as has been streamlined. Re-organised to place divisions between exhibitions, loans, documentation and technical responsibilities, each sub-section of Collections Management now performs its own specific function. Policy drafts exist to describe these functions and are due to be edited before being comprehensively adopted. As time allows, the overall remit of Collections Management will also be described in a policy document in due course.

Collections Management in Glasgow Museums began as the Registration Department; part of Corporate Services until a previous service restructure, Collections Management then operated as part of the Conservation Section from 1989. In 2002 it was finally recognised as a department in its own right, serving the wider remit of Central Services. This is where the key difference occurs between the National Galleries and Glasgow Museums in terms of Collections Management. In the National Galleries an established, but now more streamlined department

[129] 'Stakeholders were least satisfied with performance in the following areas: developing partnerships, increasing the number and range of people accessing the collections, expansion of learning opportunities.' Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, *Best Value Review Summary*, 2004, 6

continues to play a recognised and vital role as part of the Registrar's Department. By contrast, in Glasgow a new department is now asserting itself across the wider management of a vast museum service, returning to fundamental principles of collections care in order to lay the foundation necessary for introducing a viable collections management policy. Responding to the recommendations of the *Best Value Review*, the Collections Management Department has been introduced to serve an existing remit that was not previously being fulfilled efficiently, through either policy or action[130].

Unlike the National Galleries and Glasgow Museums, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery has never had an independent Collections Management department. Largely due to the gradual evolution of management principles within the Hunterian this has not been a major issue and does not seem to have had a detrimental affect on collections care or access. As curators by tradition often came from the academic schools of the university, individuals would take overall responsibility for an aspect of the collection relevant to their area of expertise. Regular discussion between curators proved to be an effective way in which the wider management of the collections could be realised and, having continued, it now appears to be a particular strength in the Hunterian that curatorial input and expertise shapes all management policies. Whereas Glasgow Museums' Collections Management Department must work to uphold its authority over issues of collections care and documentation, the Hunterian curators instead take responsibility for describing guidelines that they believe to be feasible and relevant, taking into account on-going curatorial work and the wider remit of the Hunterian, through its affiliation with the University of Glasgow.

When a particular system of management has proved successful in one institution, it is difficult to identify where improvements might be made. The Hunterian clearly has a unique approach to Collections Management that has, over the years, responded to the needs of a university museum. It has written policies that outline its objectives and expectations, approved by senior management and implemented by all staff. The National Galleries do not have a written

[130] 'To maintain standards of collections care and audit and ensure that these are applied consistently across the organization, the development and enforcement of procedures for all staff pertaining to all collections management issues is a key remit of Collections Management. As procedures are developed and agreed with other staff sections the department will act as advocates of these standards and train staff accordingly.' Glasgow Museums Central Services Department: Collections Management Section, *Collections Management Draft Five Year Plan 2003-2008*, 2

policy that describes the activities of Collections Management within the Registrar's Department, but there is no question about their provision of an exemplary service. Care of collections has always been fundamental within the National Galleries and an awareness of the collection as the galleries' core strength has always existed. Glasgow Museums is now striving to implement similar standards across its own expansive collection, but these must be developed to suit the requirements of the institution. A Collections Management Policy, although still in draft format, does exist and efforts to reverse years of neglect in terms of documentation and inventory are now being implemented. These failings are more clearly seen in some areas of the collection than others and the depth and breadth of the collection is a major consideration in all Glasgow's Collections Management decision-making. To speed progress, however, Collections Management in Glasgow Museums would greatly benefit from improved and continued curatorial support. The introduction of Major Projects and Research is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, providing a vital link between Collections Management and curatorial staff, but culture change must keep up with policy change. Staff must be willing to adapt to new practices and personal attitudes must change in support of new professional goals.

The suggestion that curatorial influence in the National Galleries extends across the service implies a situation very different from that within Glasgow Museums[131]. While subject-curators have consistently played a pivotal role in collections care throughout the history of Glasgow's museum service it is fair to say that their influence has diminished in recent years, but by contrast curators in the National Galleries are considered to be scholars. Issues of social inclusion and lifelong learning have been prioritised by Glasgow City Council and the museum service has been required to support initiatives to bring culture to excluded sections of the community, while promoting education for all. Although research and scholarship fall within the broad reach of education, academic study is generally perceived as remote from the needs of most people and certainly does not address the learning and access requirements of all age-groups. It has become apparent, however, since the opening of the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre that there is a desire within the service to underpin all museum activities with excellent knowledge. In order to achieve this, collections information must be first of all disseminated within the service.

[131] Interview with Anne Buddle

Similar to the National Galleries' Granton Centre for Art, the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre incorporates an open storage facility that provides greatly extended public access to the reserve collection of the museums. Unlike the Granton Centre, however, tours of Glasgow's Resource Centre are undertaken by education and outreach staff, rather than curators. A once-weekly curatorial tour at Granton makes an interesting comparison with daily tours of the Resource Centre, inevitably impacting on public benefit. While the National Galleries' commitment to provide curatorial knowledge of collections outweighs frequency of tours, the Resource Centre instead aims to allow maximum access, but also runs the risk of compromising quality of information. While neither institution should concede its aims of scholarship or access, a compromise between the two principles might result in a more successful use of resources. At present, the Hunterian offers no comparable access to its stored collections, although members of the public wishing to view any of the Hunterian's many works on paper can make use of the Hunterian Art Gallery's print room by making an advance appointment with the appropriate curator. Use of this facility is actively encouraged and, as far as possible, research requests are accommodated. Further access to stored collections is something that staff in the Hunterian are keen to facilitate, but resource limitations currently prohibit this.

To compensate for restricted access to its stored collections, the Hunterian provides outstanding digital access to its collections databases, allowing web-site users to search comprehensively art, geology, zoology, numismatics, archaeology, ethnography and history, scientific and medical instruments and the grouped Whistler collection. Searches of the entire site or each collection can be made using either keywords or museum number, suggesting that staff use of the search facility is frequent. An experimental test search of all collections catalogues is also available on the site, allowing themed cross-searches by keywords.

> 'This page is an experimental cheap'n'cheerful way of searching several datasets at once. It will submit your search terms to all of the current Hunterian Museum INCA datasets, as well as our group-recorded HUG collections. The search results from each will be displayed in a separate browser window. Soon I hope to implement merging of the separate datasets for a truly general search tool. Meanwhile, I hope you find this better than nothing. '[132]

This disclaimer reflects a keen belief that digital provision to museum collections should be maximised as far as possible: even if resources are limited or not fully comprehensive, the

Hunterian has firmly adopted the attitude that something is better than nothing. Although Faithfull is a clear driving force behind many of the Hunterian's digitisation policies, support also comes from the academic schools of the university. Acknowledged on the web-site, the Department of Computing Science is considered a vital collaborator in the design and maintenance of the site, demonstrating how the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery benefits from its position as a university museum, exercising an advantage in this field over both the National Galleries and Glasgow Museums.

One of the greatest failings of the National Galleries is that there is no on-line access to the national collections. Although the Multi MIMSY catalogue records are a vital resource both within Collections Management and in support of curatorial activity throughout the galleries, progress to use this information as a framework for a searchable digitised catalogue appears to have stalled. A main factor in this seems to be that no department is prepared to take responsibility for the implementation of the project, despite the need for such a facility being clearly and repeatedly detailed in the current *National Galleries of Scotland Corporate Plan.* Realistically, ICT should be prioritised within the galleries if they are to fulfill effectively the political requirements of Executive funding, but prompt delivery of on-line access remains improbable. If the Hunterian example were to be followed, a web-interface could be used with Multi MIMSY that would allow the catalogue records to be available through the internet, but even this does not look likely at present.

Glasgow Museums, on the other hand, are keen to implement a programme of digitisation as soon as possible and are considering the viability of using the Multi MIMSY web-interface, although action is delayed by concerns that the present state of the CMS records will not support a usable public access system: to achieve the desired data standards extensive editing of records will be necessary and this, together with an existing documentation backlog and the on-going *Spend to Save* inventory project, will place further strain on resources. Nevertheless, a vital difference in the attitude of Glasgow Museums' staff and their colleagues in the National Galleries may be the key factor in finding a solution for the problem of resources: in Glasgow, Collections Management, Major Projects and Research and the curatorial staff all have a vested interest in the project's completion. The timescale within which to overcome this challenge is optimistically set for

[132] Dr John Faithfull, http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk

the opening of the newly refurbished Kelvingrove in 2006, with plans to launch simultaneously both a new-look museum service and improved on-line access. Realistically, this does not seem possible given the pressure that all staff are under to deliver the Kelvingrove New Century Project on time, so the possibility of a limited database giving access only to those objects included in Kelvingrove's redisplay has been discussed. Although this would allow on-site visitors similar access to that provided by the National Galleries through their information pods in the IT gallery of the Weston Link, again it would only be a short-term solution; the investment cost of delivering this facility might be better spent in support of a long-term project to fund sustainable and comprehensive on-line access to Glasgow's collections.

A focus on collections and collections-based research is fundamental to the successful management of any museum, impacting directly on curating and collections management and also indirectly affecting marketing, fundraising and sponsorship. Such a focus has never been an issue within the National Galleries of Scotland. Pride in their collections has supported and continues to strengthen inherent academic principles that guarantee the position of the collection at the core of all museum services. Academic knowledge is in turn balanced by the best possible provision of collections care, but a key failing in remote access to the national collections at present undermines some aspects of the National Galleries' success. While published literature on the collections is actively sought from curators and up to date catalogues are available for each area of the collection, wider access to the reserve collection is limited and remote access in non-existent.

A management and curatorial policy of enabling access to the Hunterian's collections has given rise to the thriving development of ICT within the museum and art gallery. A belief that any access to collections, no matter how restricted, is preferable to no access at all has perhaps allowed the Hunterian to be slightly more experimental in their approach to collections care than either Glasgow Museums or the National Galleries. It is also possible that the academic affiliation of the University of Glasgow has lent the museum confidence in innovation. The greatest weakness in the Hunterian's current position, however, is the ownership of knowledge about the running of both the INCA CMS and some of the advanced capabilities of the web-interface. While INCA is not a solo project, Faithfull is undoubtedly the driving force behind it and its on-line access to collections. Although INCA is used as the CMS within other university museums, including St

Andrews and Aberdeen and there are detailed written guidelines on its use, Faithfull still plays an active role in trouble-shooting and problem solving. When INCA can be managed without this continuing personal input its reliability and usability will be greatly enhanced.

Research and scholarship within the Hunterian is as carefully managed as collections. The academic environment of the university prompts assumptions that staff are likely to pursue actively fields of individual interest and although this may true to an extent, the outcome of any such research must contribute to the university's RAE quota. Further collections-based research in support of exhibitions must be approved by the Hunterian's senior management, but promoting the collection externally as a resource for research remains a primary aim. This approach differs from both the National Galleries and Glasgow Museums. In the national institution curators are expected to undertake serious study of the collections and advance scholarship. External researchers are welcomed and accommodated, but curators govern this type of access. Glasgow does not yet have an infrastructure in place that, similar to the Hunterian, would allow them to encourage the use of their collections for academic research, but they too aim to employ a policy of open access to their resources.

Unifying years of inconsistent practice, that introduced a risk of inefficient service, is a task that is being attempted by Glasgow Museums within a very tight timescale. While many of the primary goals, including the refurbishment of Kelvingrove, now appear achievable, continued success and real change will depend on the implementation of new practice and standards. Raising staff morale and promoting enthusiastic participation will be central to success and the introduction of a designated Major Projects and Research department is potentially a route by which curatorial confidence might be restored. Promoting wider public confidence in the collection is not an issue as community ownership of the civic collection has always been one of Glasgow Museums' strengths; what will challenge the recently established Collections Management Department is the need to assert internal responsibility for the collection, developing good working relationships amongst curators and education and outreach staff to provide an accessible service that does not compromise on collections care.

Research and scholarship is something that has been lacking in Glasgow Museums for some time and although participation in the National Galleries most recent blockbuster exhibition, prior to the re-opening of Kelvingrove, has been a useful advertising opportunity for the city's collection, there remains real pressure to improve dramatically access to the museum's resources. Glasgow Museums clearly know what it wants to achieve in terms of a revived and modernised museums service, but some of the initial enthusiasm generated by re-structuring has not yet been realised. The service must continue to capitalise on optimism and ambition, encouraging staff to explore the collection: without curatorial participation Major Projects and Research cannot independently improve scholarship and without reliable and sustained content in the CMS it will not support a public access system, through which new and exciting information about the collections could be disseminated. Where Glasgow's success is most visible is in its fundamental aspiration to offer the best possible collections care, built on unrivalled collections-based knowledge. This is an ambition also shared by both the National Galleries of Scotland and the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery.

Conclusions

Collections for the Future, the subject of the Museums Association's current consultation, was also a major theme at the 2004 Museums Association Conference. Highlighting sector-wide concerns over the role of collections in today's museums, the issues of how collections should be shaped, managed and used are clearly ones that museum professionals are dedicated to resolving. This paper has demonstrated the focused commitment of three very different institutions to their individual collections: the growing need for continuing collections-based research, in order to strengthen this commitment, has been recognised by each one. In addition, the example of the National Inventory Research Project (NIRP) highlights an active attempt to renew interest in the UK's regional collections, by promoting them as a potential resource for art historical research.

Shaped by political and public expectation, museums have come to play an important role in society as educative centres, maximising learning and access opportunities for their users. However, this prioritisation of education has been cited as one of the contributory factors in bringing about a situation of neglected scholarship in many institutions. When the wider use of collections as tools for education commenced there was no corresponding expansion in areas of collections-based research. Without the knowledge to support education programmes museums were compromising their responsibility to both collections and visitors. Assumed to be sources of authoritative knowledge, museums must ensure that all collections-based activities are underpinned with continuing research. In order to achieve this it is now accepted that research must once more be recognised as a core museum activity and be reinstated as a curatorial priority.

The accountable management of a collection is made possible through the effective management of information about the collection and the objects it is comprised of. Object records are the primary resource for this information, therefore documentation must be considered as a fundamental responsibility of collections management. If reliable and accurate collections documentation exists, then the usability of the collection is greatly enhanced. Computer technology revolutionised collections management by replacing paper-based records with sophisticated systems capable of organising and retrieving information electronically. The use of such collections-management systems (CMS) in museums today has again widened the remit of

collections management by adding further responsibility for enhancing and improving information content: that is, the information archive that relates to each object and describes its history. Beyond the basic requirements of object name, maker and date, information content stored on the CMS can include exhibition labels, journal articles and multi-media files. In addition to this, digitisation and progressive ICT have led to public expectation that museums should provide remote access to their collections, developing on-line searchable databases that allow individuals to search independently collections without physically visiting the museum.

Collectively, documentation no longer refers to simply recording the principal details about an object. Instead, it is maintaining and enhancing an archive of information about each object in a collection, inter-relating it with further information about other objects and allowing new stories to emerge and be told. Facilitating access to this information archive is now equally as important as facilitating physical access to the objects. Intellectual access to museum collections, for the purpose of academic research, becomes ever easier as documentation standards improve.

Considering regional collections to be a largely untapped information resource, the NIRP is offering curators the chance to re-establish the importance of art-historical research in museums. Through the planned outcome of an on-line database, this project will give researchers access to a broad overview of potential research opportunities related to the UK's collections. While the usability of this database will depend on the inclusion of basic catalogue information for each work falling within the project remit, what is particularly relevant about the NIRP to this paper is that it is not an example of research being realised, but instead demonstrates how museums can promote collections-based research by adhering to fundamental documentation standards. If this information is then made publicly accessible the opportunity exists to continue promoting interest in museum collections: any new knowledge generated as a result would in turn be used to underpin the wider management and educational objectives of the museums involved.

As discussed, the National Galleries of Scotland are confident in their current documentation practices, but achieving an exemplary standard of documentation is not enough on its own. A key failing of the National Galleries is its lack of remote access to its collections, preventing the dissemination of information that might encourage external academic research. The

Galleries must commit to providing digital access in order to guarantee the wider usability of its collections as an invaluable resource for research. Although internal research provides the collections-based knowledge necessary to underpin accountable use of the national collections, decisive improvements could be made to the Galleries' skills-sharing partnerships. As a national institution claiming to be a centre of excellence, the National Galleries of Scotland must play a wider supporting role to ensure that other institutions benefit from their expertise. Circulating standards of good practice and offering support to curators embarking on collections-based research projects would ensure that assistance is given to other museums in need of guidance, who are looking to refocus attention on their collections.

In contrast to the National Galleries, a key strength of the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, is its use of digital media. Full public access to the museum's catalogue is possible on-line, sustained by excellent documentation records, automatically giving prospective researchers immediate entry to the Hunterian's collections. The academic environment of the university campus has shaped the museum's approach to collections-based knowledge and staff actively promote the collections as resources for research, targeting both the immediate academic community and wider audiences. Staff participation in RAE-eligible research is also encouraged, benefiting individuals, the museum and the University, while also contributing to the foundation of knowledge upon which the Hunterian strives to build its identity and service.

Glasgow Museums proved to be a fascinating subject for a case study, giving context to the wider themes and ideas approached in this paper. Carrying out a practical project of enhanced documentation made it possible to illustrate the potential for increased intellectual access to Glasgow's Italian art collection by improving the basic catalogue records. In addition, the opportunity to compare the current information content of these records with the recently published catalogue entries from *The Age of Titian* highlighted further the need for renewed attention on these internationally important paintings. Adding interest to this case study was the current situation within the museums service, post restructuring and prior to the re-opening of a newly refurbished and redisplayed Kelvingrove. With an emphatic desire to underpin a renewed service with improved collections-based knowledge, Glasgow Museums is now making a long-term commitment to research. The creation of Major Projects and Research, a department dedicated to

instigating and supporting scholarship, has reinstated research as a fundamental principle of accountable and effective service. 'Glasgow Museums is committed to achieving excellence in research so that it can provide excellence in all aspects of its service to visitors, including interpretation, education and access. '[133]

Supporting Glasgow Museums' claim that 'sound, authoritative knowledge is the bedrock of Glasgow's museum service'[134], basic inventory has been prioritised by Collections Management, with the aim of readdressing basic principles of documentation in order to create a relevant information resource that will support both access and continuing research. Modernising the service cannot be done without revisiting past instances of bad practice, learning from experience and dealing with the root of the problem. Unless the collection is comprehensively documented the museum will not be able to develop the necessary framework to transform and manage it as an international research resource. Glasgow's commitment to developing on-line access to its collection makes the revision and editing of its documentation records a priority. Aware that information retrieved from the CMS is equal to the information originally entered, Glasgow is now learning the lesson that quality would undoubtedly have been preferable over quantity.

To create a knowledge-based CMS, investment of both staffing and time must be made. There is no rapid solution to improving the dissemination of knowledge about a collection without a foundation of accurate documentation. Accountable collections management depends on institutions knowing their collections. Increasing intellectual access for the purpose of academic research depends on the provision of a usable information resource. Documentation must remain a museum priority. Backlogs must be dealt with, existing records must be consistently edited and updated and the CMS catalogue entries must be enhanced with related information content. If this can be achieved, provision is made for a rich and diverse resource for continuing academic research: sustaining this resource relies on the application of similar high standards and accountable practices to new collections-based knowledge, as it emerges.

[133] Major Projects and Research, *Draft Research Policy*, Glasgow Museums, 1
[134] ibid

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Appendices

Appendix A Draft catalogue entry: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

Appendix B Draft catalogue entry: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

Appendix C Draft catalogue entry: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

Appendix D Draft catalogue entry: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

Appendix A: Draft catalogue entry: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

Giovanni BELLINI 1431? – 1516 [Italian – Venetian]

Madonna and Child

oil on wood panel

62.2 x 46.4 cm
24½ x 18¼ ins

unsigned, no date

575

Provenance:

Bequeathed by Mrs John Graham-Gilbert, 1877

Exhibition:

Edinburgh, 2004, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, Royal Scottish Academy, National Galleries of Scotland, 5 August – 5 December, n.3, p., repr. col.

Literature:

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Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum Kelvingrove, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Corporation Museums and Art Galleries, Glasgow, 1902, n.89, p.17;

Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Corporation Museums and Art Galleries. Ninth edition, Glasgow, 1903, n.89, p.17;
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Peter Humfrey, 'Collecting Venetian painting in Scotland' in Humfrey, Clifford, Weston-Lewis, Bury, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, exh. cat. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2004, p.50, 55

Related Works:

Giovanni Bellini 1431(?) – 1516, Italian – Venetian, The Virgin and Child, National Gallery, n.280;
Giovanni Bellini 1431(?) – 1516, Italian – Venetian, The Madonna of the Meadow, National Gallery, n.599;
Giovanni Bellini 1431(?) – 1516, Italian – Venetian, The Virgin and Child, National Gallery, n.3913;
Giovanni Bellini 1431(?) – 1516, Italian – Venetian, The Virgin and Child, National Gallery, n.3078;

Appendix B: Draft catalogue entry: Giorgione,

The Adulteress brought before Christ

Attributed to Giorgio de Castelfranco, called GIORGIONE
Active 1506 – died 1510 [Italian – Venetian]

The Adulteress brought before Christ [c.1508–10, exhibition, Wildenstein's 1980]

oil on canvas

139.2 x 181.8 cm
54 7/8 x 71½ ins

unsigned, no date

181

Provenance:

Possibly the *Adultera* attributed to Giorgione mentioned in the inventory of Gio Vincenzo Imperiale, Genoa 1661;
Collection of Queen Christina of Sweden, inv. n.69, 1689 (as by Giorgione) and inv. n.121, 1721 (as by Pordenone);
Passed through the Orleans Collection (as by Bordone);
McLellan Collection (as by Giorgione)
Bequeathed by Archibald McLellan, 1854

Exhibition:

Glasgow, 1882-83, *Italian Art Loan Exhibition*, Corporation Galleries Glasgow, n.10, p.2 (as by Giorgione, 1477 – 1511, Venetian);
London, 1893, *Winter Exhibition*, Royal Academy, n.119;
London, 1909-10, *Exhibition of Old Masters*, Grafton Galleries, n.85;
London, 1930, *Italian Art 1200-1900*, Royal Academy, n.162;
London, *Works by Holbein and other Masters of the 16th and 17th centuries*, Royal Academy, n.214;
London, 1953, National Gallery (after cleaning);
Glasgow, 1954, *McLellan Gallery Centenary Exhibition*, Glasgow Art Gallery, summer, n.22, p.10 (as by Giorgio Barbarelli, called Giorgione, c.1478-1510, Italian – Venetian);
Venice, 1955, *Giorgione e i Giorgioneschi*, n.47;
London, 1962, *Primitives to Picasso: An Exhibition from Municipal and University Collections in Great Britain*, Royal Academy of Arts, winter exhibition, n.35, p.15 (as by Giorgione, 1478 – 1510);

London, 1980, *Paintings from Glasgow Art Gallery: A loan exhibition in aid of the National Art – Collections Fund,* Wildenstein's, 28 February – 29 March 1980, n.11. p.10-11, repr. b/w p.20 (as by Giorgio da Castelfranco, called Giorgione);
London, 1983, *The Genius of Venice*, Royal Academy, 25 November 1983 – 11 March 1984, n.35;
Paris, 1993, *Le siècle de Titian*, Grand Palais, 9 March – 14 June 1993, n.42a;
Edinburgh, 2004, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, Royal Scottish Academy, National Galleries of Scotland, 5 August – 5 December, n.13, p.80-1, repr. col.

Literature:

Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Corporation Galleries of Art, Glasgow, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Galleries, Glasgow, 1882, n.142, p.31 (as by Giorgione, 1477 – 1511, Italian – Venetian);
Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Corporation Galleries of Art, Glasgow, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Galleries, and of Kelvingrove Museum. Fifth edition, (Illustrated), Glasgow, 1892, n.142, p.32, (as by Giorgione, 1477 – 1511, Italian – Venetian);
Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Corporation Museums and Art Galleries, Glasgow, 1902, n.370, p.60, (as by Giorgione, (Giorgio Barbarelli), 1476 – 1511, Italian – Venetian);
Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of all the Corporation Museums and Art Galleries. Ninth edition, Glasgow, 1903, n.370, p.66 (as by Giorgio Barbarelli, called Giorgione, 1477 – 1511, Italian – Venetian);
Catalogue (Illustrated) of the Old Masters Dutch, Flemish, Italian 1500-1700, Introduction by T.C.F. Bratchie, Corporation of Glasgow, Art Galleries and Museums, Kelvingrove, Glasgow, 1922, p.109-110, repr. b/w;
Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures in the Glasgow Art Galleries and Museums, Introduction by James Eggleton, Glasgow, 1935, p.116-117
Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, Venetian School*, 2 vols, London, 1957, vol.1, p.84, repr. b/w, vol.2, pl.661 (Cariani copy), details pl.659 and 660;
Catalogue of Italian Paintings with which is included a small group of Spanish Pictures, Illustrations, Introduction by George Buchanan, Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, 1970, p.17, repr. col., p.62, repr. b/w;
Pietro Zampetti, *The Complete Paintings of Giorgione*, London, 1970, p.95, n.34, repr. b/w (as by Mancini);
Johannes Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titan*, Oxford, 1974, p.118, repr. b/w p.115;

Jane Martineau, Charles Hope (editors), *The Genius of Venice*, London, 1983, p.169-170, repr. colour p.52;
Michel Laclotte (ed), *Le siècle de Titien*, Paris 1993, p.379-400 (as by Titian) (as *Susanne and Daniel*), entry written by Alessandro Ballarin;
P. Joannides, 'Two Topics in the early work of Titian', *Apollo*, October 1994, (as by early Titian) (as related to Venice *Visitation*);
P. Joannides, *Titian to 1518: The Assumption of Genius*, New Haven and London, 2001;
Peter Humfrey, 'Collecting Venetian painting in Scotland' in Peter Humfrey, Timothy Clifford, Aidan Weston-Lewis, Michael Bury, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, exh. cat. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2004, p.53

Appendix C: Draft catalogue entry: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

Jacopo TINTORETTO 1518-1594 [Italian – Venetian]

The ordeal of Tuccia

oil on canvas

47.6 x 103.2 cm
18¾ x 40 5/8 ins

unsigned, no date

189

Provenance:

Bequeathed by Archibald McLellan, 1854

Exhibition:

London, 1930, *Italian Art 1200 – 1900*, Royal Academy of Arts, n.336 (as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, 1522-1582, Italian – Venetian), (as *Salome going to receive the head of St John the Baptist*);
London, 1930, *Italian Art*, Royal Academy of Arts, January – March 1930, n.445;
(as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, 1522-1582, Italian – Venetian);
Harrogate, 1931, *Italian Paintings*, Municipal Art Gallery, 31 July – 31 October 1931, (as by Andrea Schiavone, 1522-1582, Italian – Venetian), (as *Salome going to receive John the Baptist's head*);
Glasgow, 1954, *McLellan Gallery Centenary Exhibition*, Glasgow Art Gallery, summer, n.51, p.14, (as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, c.1522 – 1563, Italian – Venetian);
Edinburgh, 2004, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, Royal Scottish Academy, National Galleries of Scotland, 5 August – 5 December, n.51, p.154, repr. col. (as by Workshop of Jacopo Tintoretto);

Literature:

Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Corporation Galleries of Art, Glasgow, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Galleries, Glasgow, 1882, n.432, p.86, (as by Andrea Schiavone, 1522 – 1582, Italian – Venetian), (as *The Daughter of Herodias*);

Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Corporation Galleries of Art, Glasgow, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Galleries, and of Kelvingrove Museum. Fifth edition, (Illustrated), Glasgow, 1892, n.432, p.87, (as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, 1522 – 1582, Italian – Venetian), (as *The Daughter of Herodias*);
Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum Kelvingrove, compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Corporation Museums and Art Galleries, Glasgow, 1902, p.141, n.906 (as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, c.1522 – 1582, Italian – Venetian), (as *Salome going for John Baptist's head*);
Catalogue (Illustrated) of the Old Masters Dutch, Flemish, Italian 1500-1700, Introduction by T.C.F. Bratchie, Corporation of Glasgow, Art Galleries and Museums, Kelvingrove, Glasgow, 1922, p.106-7, (as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone, 1522-1582, Italian – Venetian), (as *Salome going for John Baptist's head*);
Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures in the Glasgow Art Galleries and Museums, Introduction by James Eggleton, Glasgow, 1935, p.290, (as by Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone);
Catalogue of Italian Paintings with which is included a small group of Spanish Pictures, Illustrations, Introduction by George Buchanan, Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, 1970, p.189, repr. b/w;
Robert Echols, 'Tintoretto, *Christ at the Sea of Galilee* and the unknown later career of Lambert Sustris', *Venezia Cinquecento, Studio di storia dell'arte e della cultura*, anno vi, n.12, July – December 1996 (as by Lambert Sustris);
Peter Humfrey, 'Collecting Venetian painting in Scotland' in Peter Humfrey, Timothy Clifford, Aidan Weston-Lewis, Michael Bury, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, exh. cat. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2004, p.53 (as by Workshop of Tintoretto)

Condition:

1954 notice of restoration on back

Description, Notes, etc:

Nothing on back

On frame. Royal Academy 'Italian Art' label
Jan 1st – Mar 8th
Artist: Schiavone

"A replica of the picture which has been in the Dresden Collection since 1742". *Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Corporation Galleries of Art, Glasgow,* compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Galleries, and of Kelvingrove Museum. Fifth edition, (Illustrated), Glasgow, 1892, p.23.

"From the sale of the Stourhead Relics, Hoare Collection; purchased through Sir Charles Robinson". *Catalogue Descriptive and Historical of the Pictures and Sculpture in the Corporation Galleries of Art, Glasgow,* compiled by James Paton, Superintendent of the Galleries, and of Kelvingrove Museum. Fifth edition, (Illustrated), Glasgow, 1892, p.23.

Appendix D: Draft catalogue entry: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

School of PALMA VECCHIO c.1480-1528 [Italian – Venetian]

Virgin and Child

oil on panel

33 x 22.9 cm
13 x 9 ins

unsigned, no date

3182

Provenance:

Presented by Mrs John G. Coats, 1948

Exhibitions:

Edinburgh, 2004, *The Age of Titian: Venetian Renaissance Art from Scottish Collections*, Royal Scottish Academy, National Galleries of Scotland, 5 August – 5 December, n.21, p.97, repr. col (as by Attributed to Domenico Capriolo, Venice, c.1494-1528, Treviso)

Literature:

Catalogue of Italian Paintings with which is included a small group of Spanish Pictures, Illustrations, Introduction by George Buchanan, Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, 1970, p.78, repr. b/w (as by Follower of Palma Vecchio, 1480?-1528, Italian-Venetian), (as *The Madonna and Child*)
M. Lucco, *Pardenone a Venezia*, Paragone, 1975, p.21, pl.12 (as by Pordenone)

Condition:

Description, Notes, etc:

M. Lucco, Padua University, confirmed his opinion that 3182 is an early Pordenone on a visit to Glasgow Art Gallery, 1 May 1986.

Illustrations

1 Object file: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

2 Object file: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

3 Object file: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

4 Object file: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

5 Record card: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

6 Record card: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

7 Record card: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

8 Record card: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

9 Photograph (front & reverse): Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*
George Buchanan's handwritten notes.

10 *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

11 *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

12 *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

13 *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

14 Multi MIMSY record card: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

15 Multi MIMSY record card: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

16 Multi MIMSY record card: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

17 Multi MIMSY record card: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

18 Italian art object files, Glasgow Museums Resource Centre

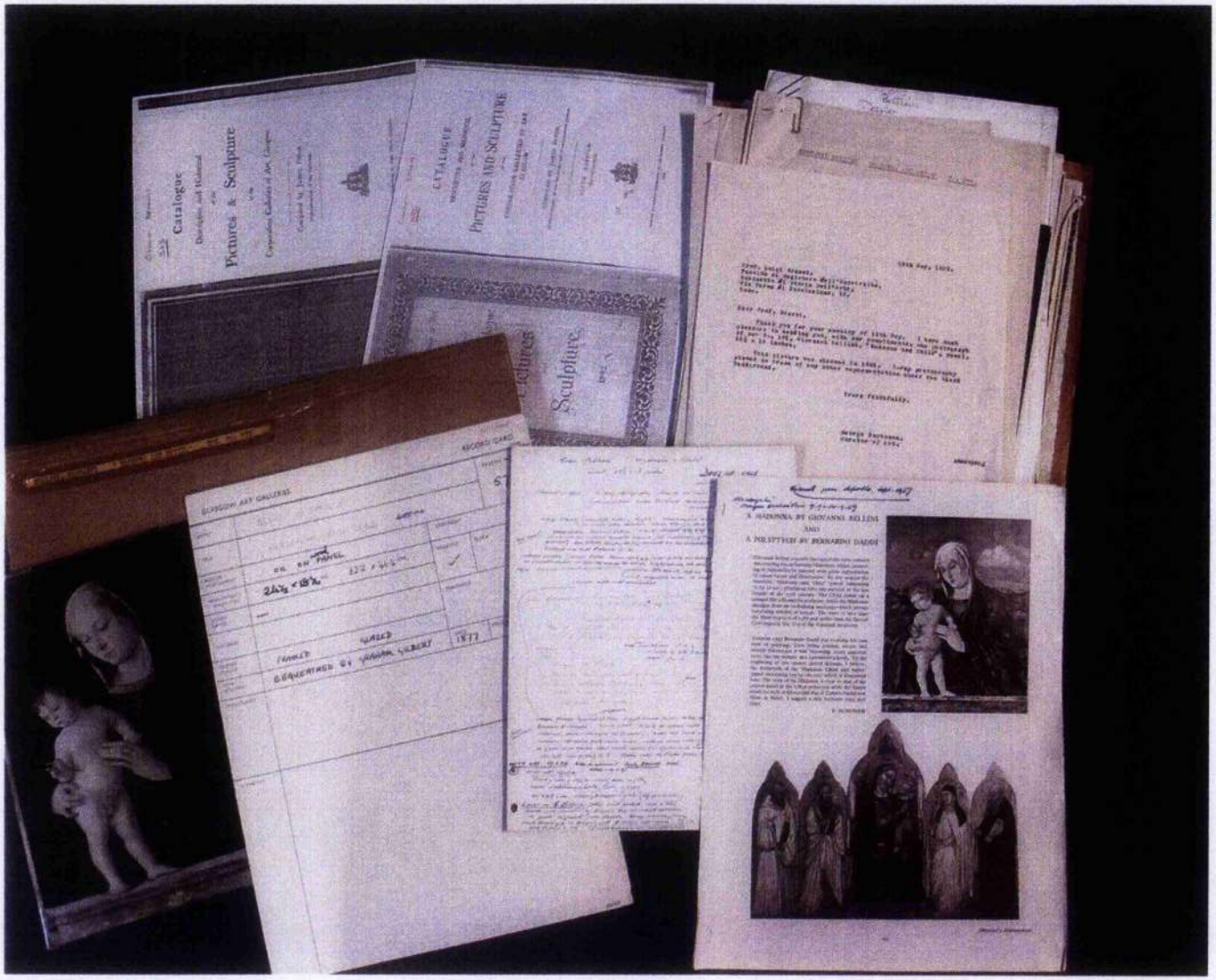


Illustration 1: Object file: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

Illustration 2: Object file: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

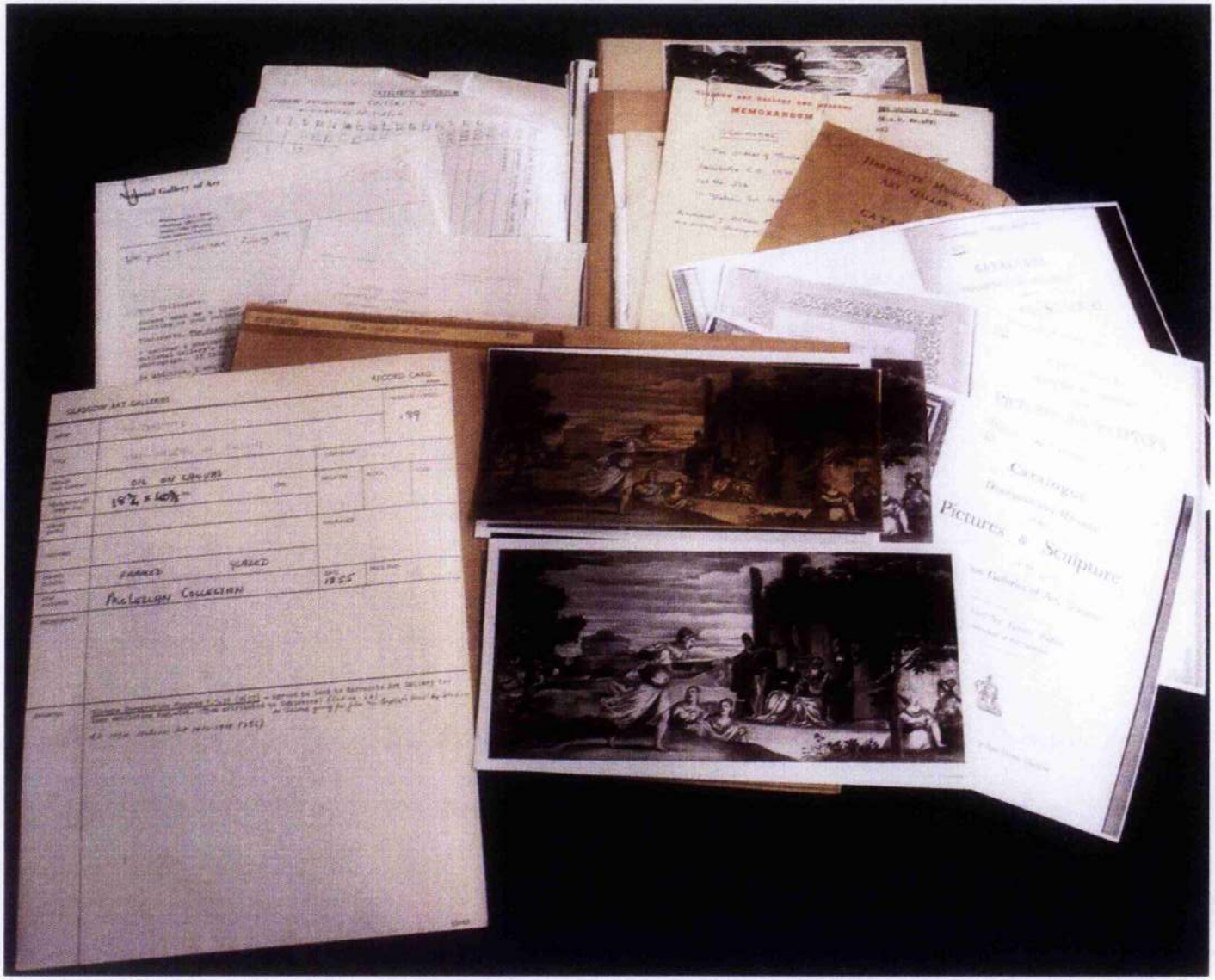


Illustration 3: Object file: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

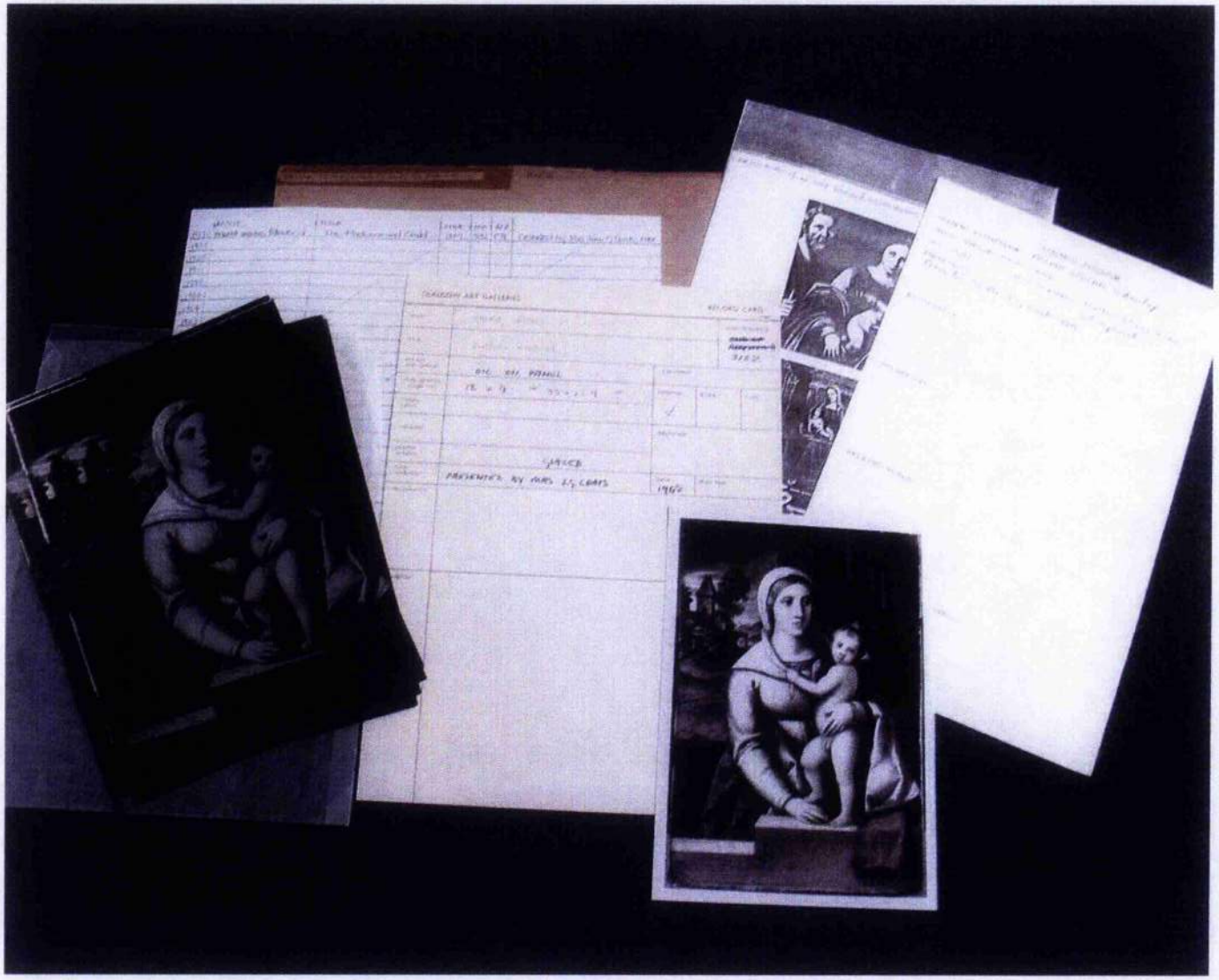
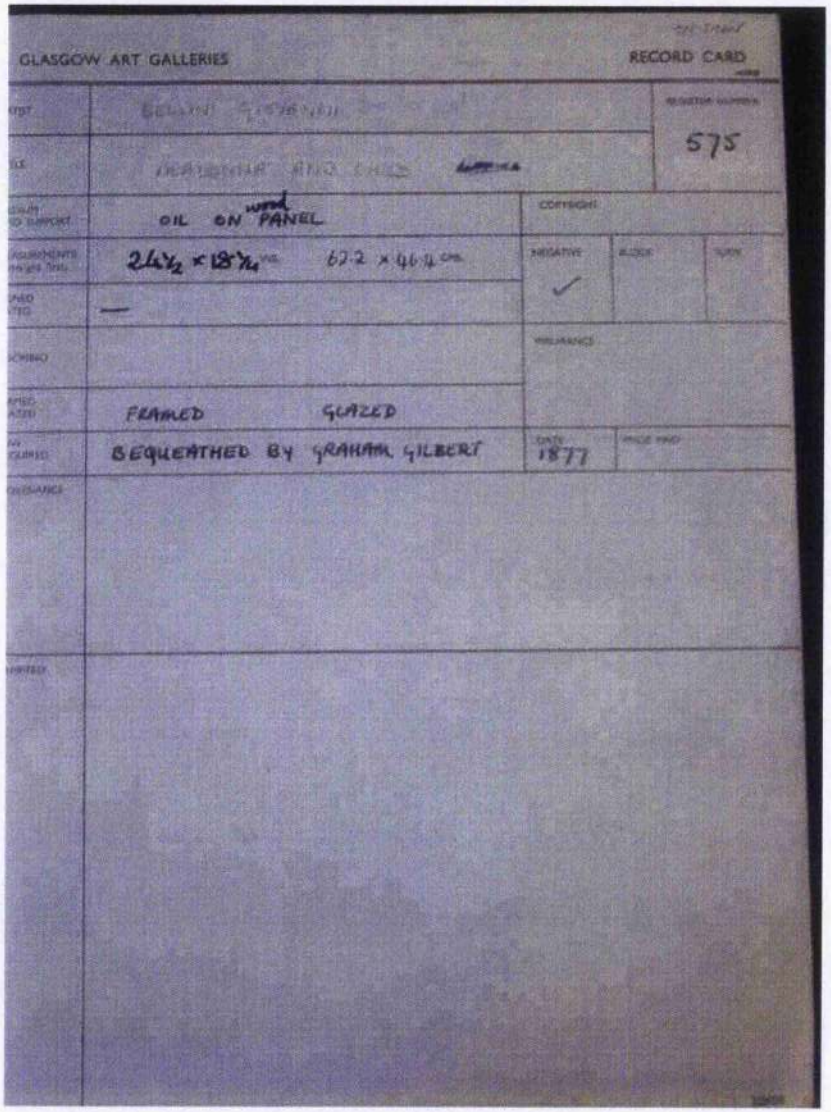
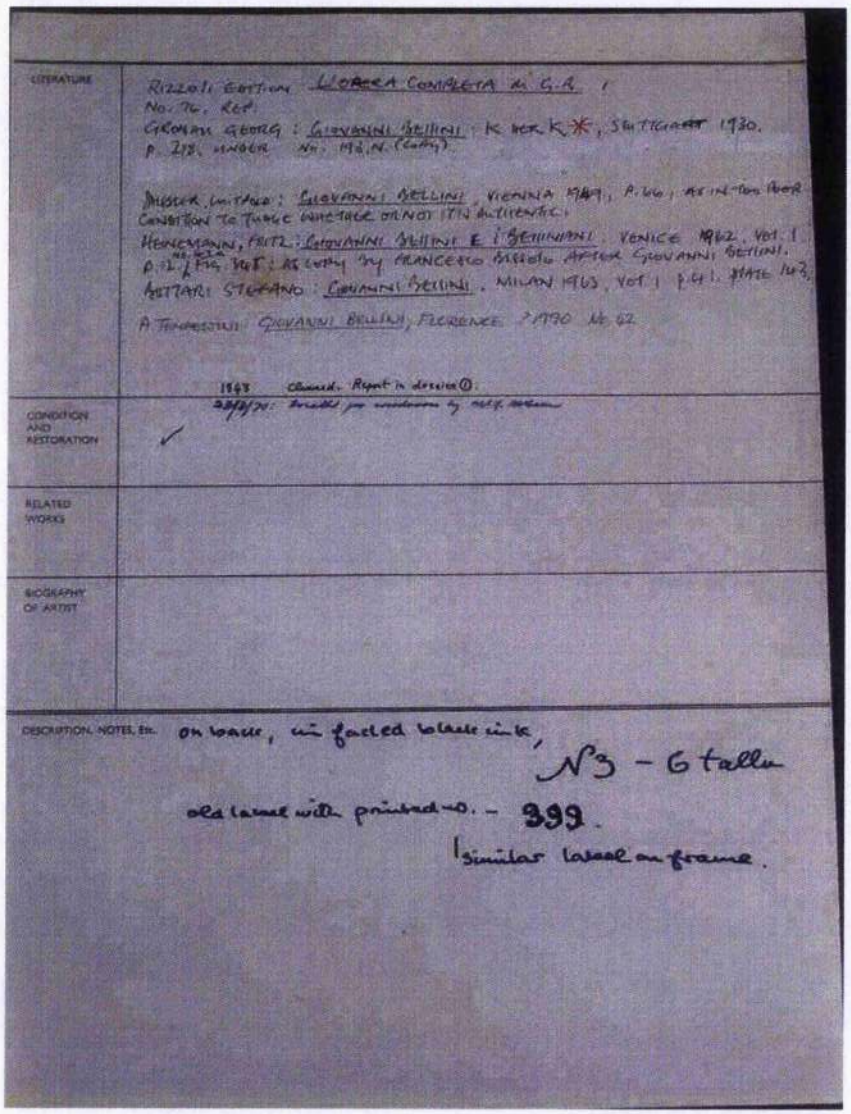


Illustration 4: Object file: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*



GLASGOW ART GALLERIES — RECORD CARD

ARTIST	BELLINI GIOVANNI	REGISTER NUMBER	575
TITLE	MADONNA AND CHILD		
MEDIUM AND SUPPORT	OIL ON wood PANEL	COPYRIGHT	
MEASUREMENTS	24½ × 18¾ ins. 62.2 × 46.4 cms.	NEGATIVE ✓	BLOCK / SLIDE
DATED	—		
DESCRIBED		PREVIOUS	
FRAMED / GLAZED	FRAMED GLAZED		
ACQUIRED	BEQUEATHED BY GRAHAM GILBERT	DATE 1877	PRICE PAID
PROVENANCE			
EXHIBITED			



LITERATURE

RIZZOLI EDITION L'OPERA COMPLETA di G.B. 1
No. 76. REP.
GRONAU GEORG: GIOVANNI BELLINI: K. DER K. *, STUTTGART 1930.
P. 218. UNDER No. 193. N. (Copy).

MUSSER, MITTAUD: GIOVANNI BELLINI, VIENNA 1949, P. 66, AS IN TOO POOR CONDITION TO TRACE WHETHER OR NOT IT IS AUTHENTIC.
HEINEMANN, FRITZ: GIOVANNI BELLINI E I BELLINIANI. VENICE 1962, VOL. 1 P. 12, No. 62 FIG. 348: AS COPY BY FRANCESCO BISSOLO AFTER GIOVANNI BELLINI.
BOTTARI STEFANO: GIOVANNI BELLINI. MILAN 1963, VOL. 1 P. 41. PLATE 143.

A. TEMPESTINI: GIOVANNI BELLINI, FLORENCE ? 1990 No. 62

1943 Cleaned. Report in dossier ①.
28/3/70: Recalled for [illegible]

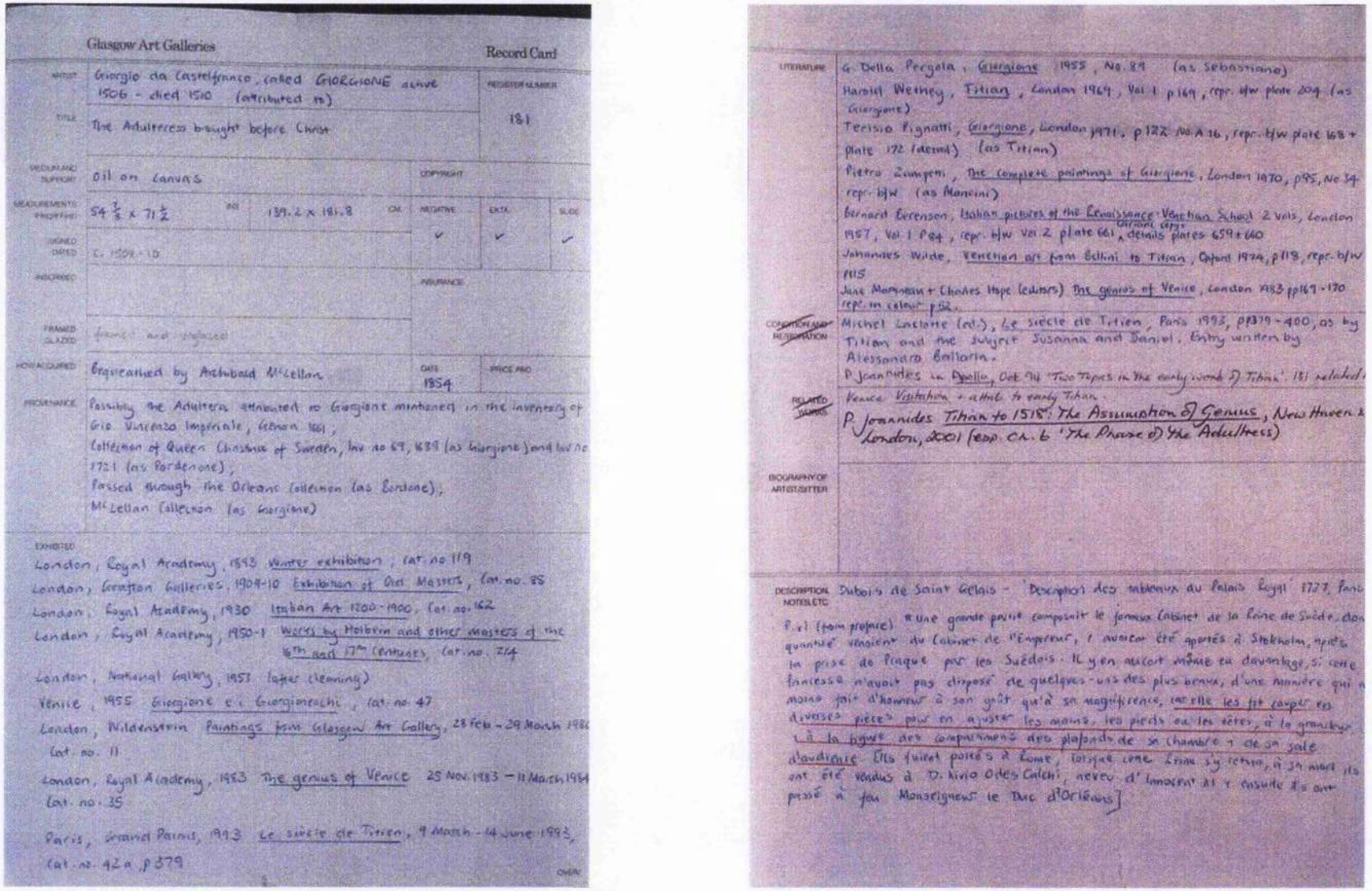
CONDITION AND RESTORATION ✓

RELATED WORKS

BIOGRAPHY OF ARTIST

DESCRIPTION, NOTES, Etc. on back, in faded black ink,
N3 - 6 talla
old label with printed no. - 399.
similar label on frame.

Illustration 5: Record Card: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*



Glasgow Art Galleries — Record Card

ARTIST: Giorgio da Castelfranco, called GIORGIONE active 1506 - died 1510 (attributed to)

REGISTER NUMBER: 181

TITLE: The Adulteress brought before Christ

MEDIUM AND SUPPORT: Oil on canvas

COPYRIGHT:

MEASUREMENTS PROPERTY: 54 7/8 x 71 1/2 INS 139.2 x 181.8 CM

NEGATIVE: ✓ EXTA: ✓ SLIDE: ✓

SIGNED DATED: C. 1508-10

INSCRIBED:

INSURANCE:

FRAMED GLAZED: framed and unglazed

HOW ACQUIRED: Bequeathed by Archibald McLellan

DATE: 1854

PRICE PAID:

PROVENANCE: Possibly the Adultera attributed to Giorgione mentioned in the inventory of Gio. Vincenzo Imperiale, Genoa 1661;
Collection of Queen Christina of Sweden, Inv no 69, 1689 (as Giorgione) and Inv no 1721 (as Pordenone);
Passed through the Orleans Collection (as Bordone);
McLellan Collection (as Giorgione)

EXHIBITED:

London, Royal Academy, 1893 Winter exhibition, Cat. no 119
London, Grafton Galleries, 1909-10 Exhibition of Old Masters, Cat. no. 85
London, Royal Academy, 1930 Italian Art 1200-1900, Cat. no. 162
London, Royal Academy, 1950-1 Works by Holbein and other masters of the 16th and 17th Centuries, Cat. no. 214
London, National Gallery, 1951 (after cleaning)
Venice, 1955 Giorgione e i Giorgioneschi, Cat. no. 47
London, Wildenstein Paintings from Glasgow Art Gallery, 28 Feb - 29 March 1980 Cat. no. 11
London, Royal Academy, 1983 The genius of Venice 25 Nov. 1983 - 11 March 1984 Cat. no. 35
Paris, Grand Palais, 1993 Le siècle de Titien, 9 March - 14 June 1993, Cat. no. 42a, p 379

OVER

LITERATURE:

G. Della Pergola, Giorgione 1955, No. 89 (as Sebastiano)
Harold Wethey, Titian, London 1969, Vol 1 p 169, repr. b/w plate 204 (as Giorgione)
Teresio Pignatti, Giorgione, London 1971, p 122 No. A 16, repr. b/w plate 168 + plate 172 (detail) (as Titian)
Pietro Zampetti, The complete paintings of Giorgione, London 1970, p 95, No 34 repr. b/w (as Mancini)
Bernard Berenson, Italian pictures of the Renaissance: Venetian School 2 vols, London 1957, Vol 1 P 84, repr. b/w Vol 2 plate 661, Oriani copy details plates 659 + 660
Johannes Wilde, Venetian art from Bellini to Titian, Oxford 1974, p 118, repr. b/w p 115
Jane Martineau + Charles Hope (editors) The genius of Venice, London 1983 pp 169-170 repr. in colour p 52.

CONDITION AND RESTORATION:

Michel Laclotte (ed.), Le siècle de Titien, Paris 1993, pp 379-400, as by Titian and the subject Susanna and Daniel. Entry written by Alessandro Ballarin.
P. Joannides in Apollo, Oct 94 'Two Topics in the early work of Titian'. 181 related to Venice Visitation + attrib. to early Titian.

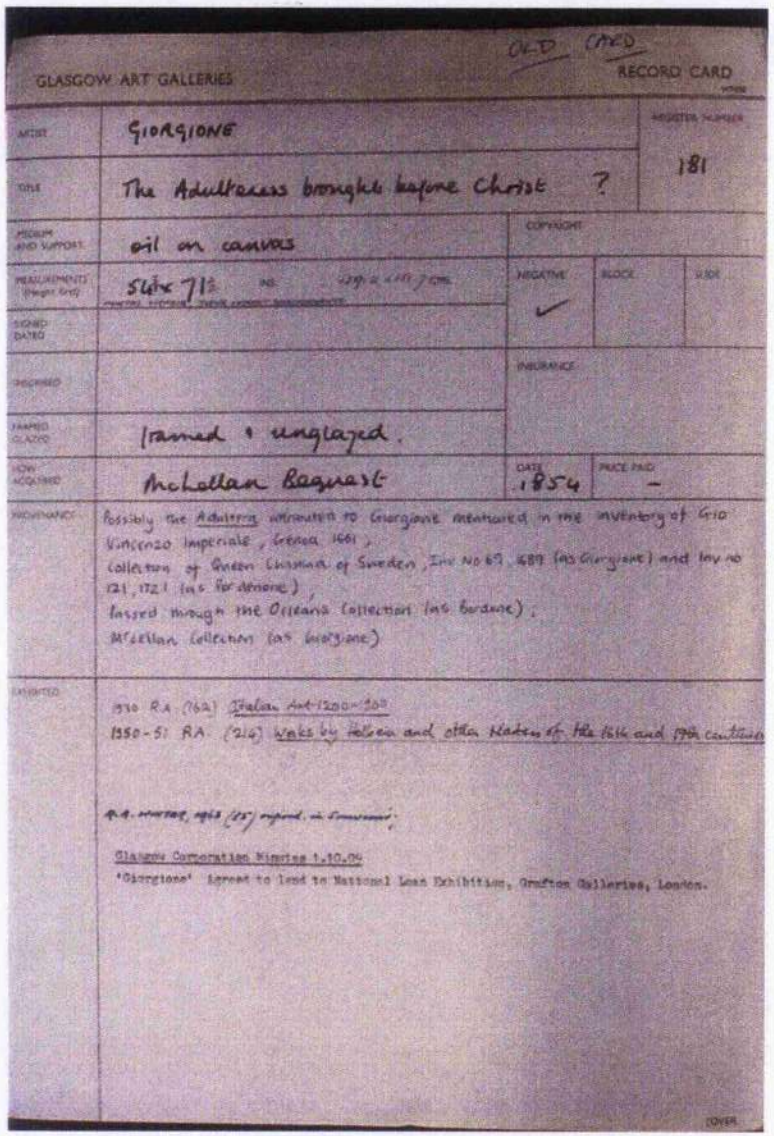
RELATED WORKS:

P. Joannides Titian to 1518: The Assumption of Genius, New Haven & London, 2001 (esp. ch. 6 'The Phase of the Adultress)

BIOGRAPHY OF ARTIST/SITTER:

DESCRIPTION NOTES ETC: Dubois de Saint Gelais - 'Description des tableaux du Palais Royal' 1727, Paris P. xi (from preface) "Une grande partie composait le fameux Cabinet de la Reine de Suède, dont quantité venaient du Cabinet de l'Empereur, et avaient été apportés à Stokholm, après la prise de Prague par les Suédois. Il y en aurait même eu davantage, si cette Princesse n'avait pas disposé de quelques-uns des plus beaux, d'une manière qui a moins fait d'honneur à son goût qu'à sa magnificence, car elle les fit couper en diverses pièces pour en ajuster les mains, les pieds ou les têtes, à la grandeur et à la figure des compartimens des plafonds de sa chambre et de sa sale d'audience. Ils furent portés à Rome, lorsque cette Reine s'y retira, à sa mort ils ont été vendus à D. Livio Odescalchi, neveu d'Innocent XI et ensuite ils ont passé à feu Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans]

Illustration 6: Record Card: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*



GLASGOW ART GALLERIES

OLD CARD

RECORD CARD

ARTIST: GIORGIONE

REGISTER NUMBER: 181

TITLE: The Adulteress brought before Christ ?

MEDIUM AND SUPPORT: oil on canvas

COPYRIGHT

MEASUREMENTS: 56½ x 71½ ins

NEGATIVE: ✓

BLOCK

SLIDE

SIGNED/DATED

PURCHASED

INSURANCE

FRAMED/GLAZED: framed + unglazed.

HOW ACQUIRED: McLellan Bequest

DATE: 1854

PRICE PAID: –

PROVENANCE: Possibly the Adultery attributed to Giorgione mentioned in the inventory of Gio Vincenzo Imperiale, Genoa 1661, collection of Queen Christina of Sweden, Inv No 69, 689 (as Giorgione) and Inv no 121, 172.1 (as Pordenone), passed through the Orleans Collection (as Bordone), McLellan Collection (as Giorgione)

EXHIBITED: 1930 R.A. (762) Italian Art 1200-1700

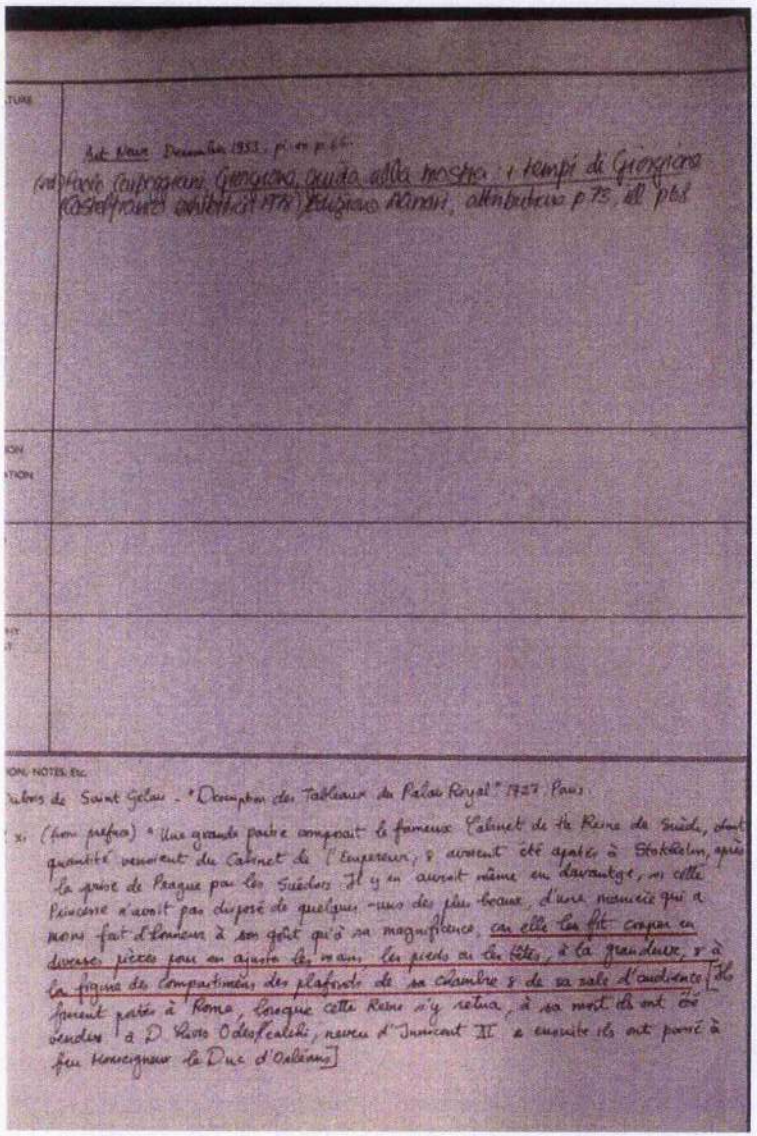
1950-51 R.A. (214) Works by Italian and other Masters of the 16th and 17th centuries

R.A. Winter, 1951 (125) repeated in Commemorative

Glasgow Corporation Minutes 1.10.04

'Giorgione' agreed to lend to National Loan Exhibition, Grafton Galleries, London.

COVER



Art News December 1933, p. 11 p. 16

(col) Fiocco (Giuseppe) Giorgione, Guida alla mostra, i tempi di Giorgione (Castelfranco Veneto) 1938 Longhi (Roberto) Roma, attribuzioni p. 73, ill. pl. 68

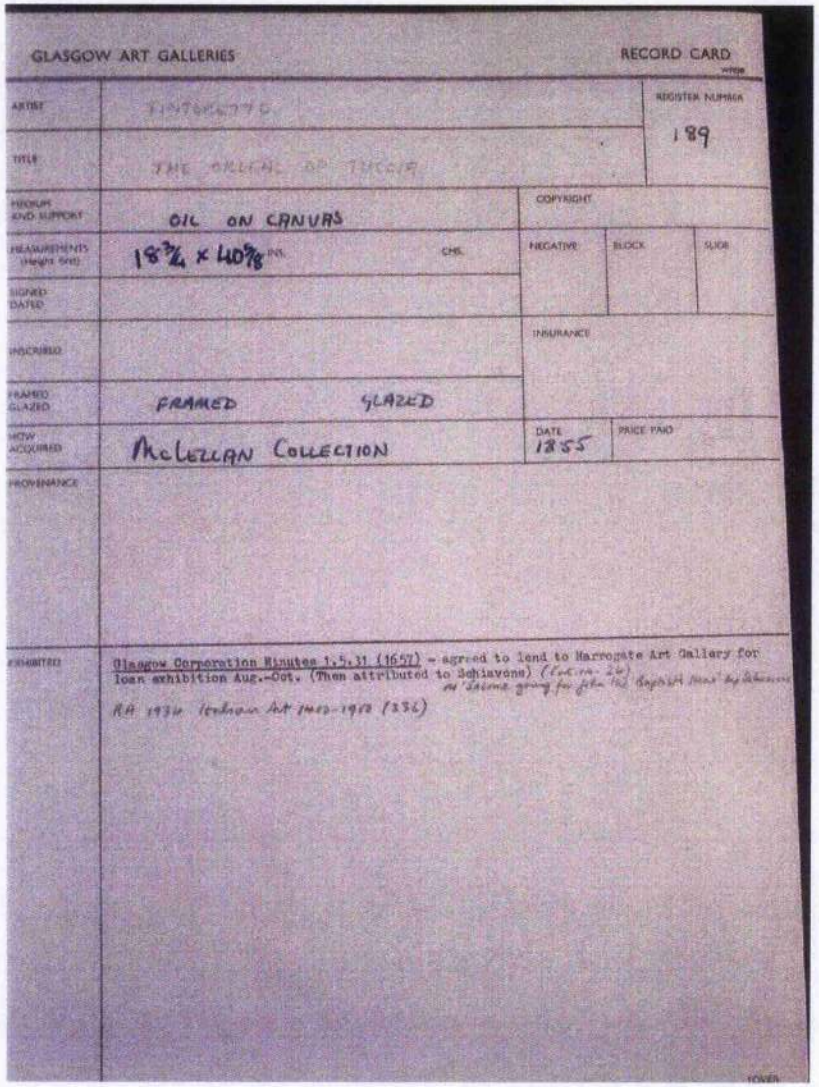
NOTES, Etc.

Tableaux de Saint Gelais - "Description des Tableaux du Palais Royal" 1727 Paris

(from preface) "Une grande partie composait le fameux Cabinet de la Reine de Suède, dont quantité venaient du Cabinet de l'Empereur, & avaient été apportés à Stockholm, après la prise de Prague par les Suédois. Il y en aurait même eu davantage, si cette Princesse n'avait pas disposé de quelques-uns des plus beaux, d'une manière qui a moins fait l'honneur à son goût qu'à sa magnificence, car elle les fit couper en diverses pièces pour en ajuster les mains, les pieds ou les têtes, à la grandeur, & à la figure de Compartimens des plafonds de sa Chambre & de sa sale d'audience. Ils furent portés à Rome, lorsque cette Reine s'y retira, & à sa mort ils ont été vendus à D. Livio Odescalchi, neveu d'Innocent XI. & ensuite ils ont passé à feu Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans."

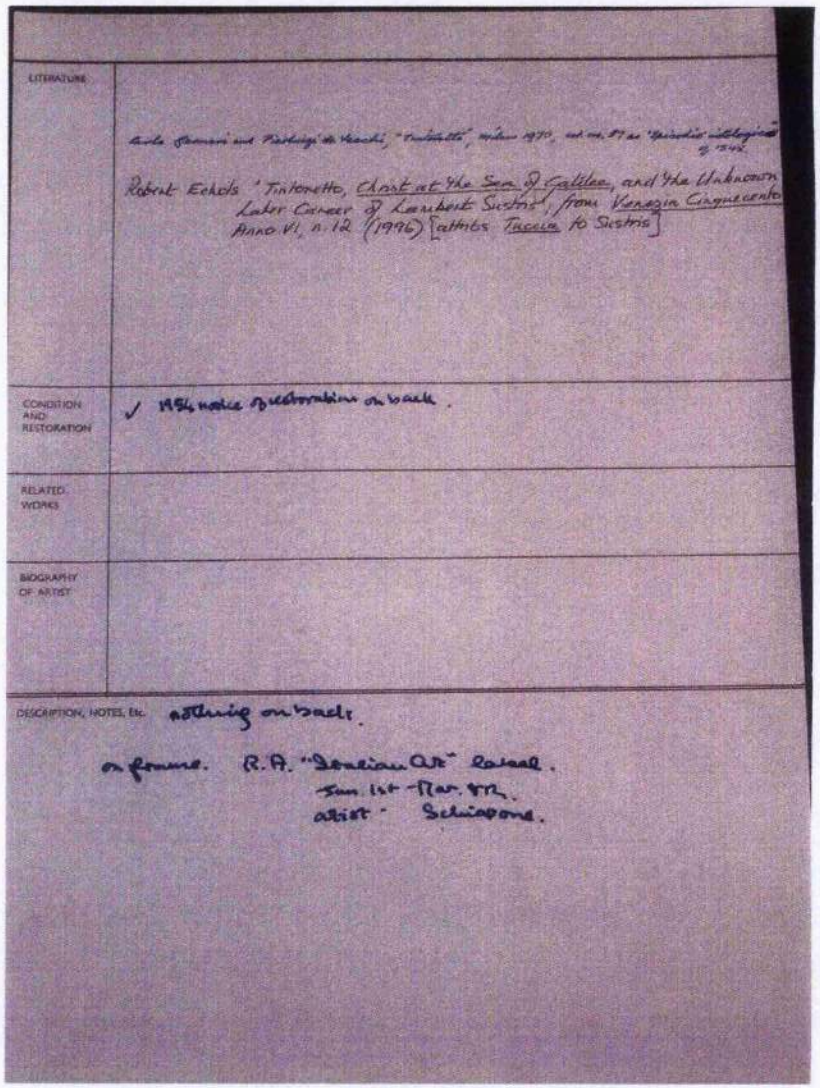
Illustration 6: Record Card: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

(old card, still in file. Included to illustrate object archive)



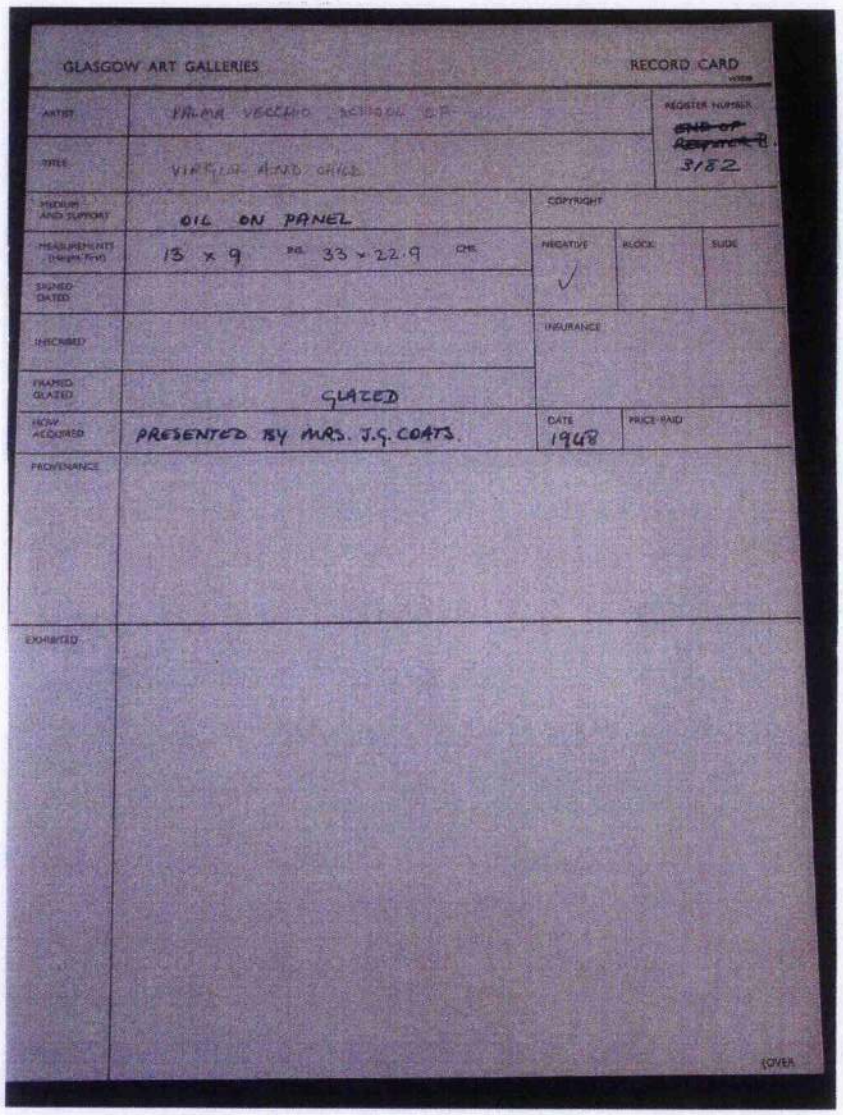
GLASGOW ART GALLERIES — RECORD CARD

ARTIST	TINTORETTO	REGISTER NUMBER	189
TITLE	THE ORDEAL OF TUCCIA		
MEDIUM AND SUPPORT	OIL ON CANVAS	COPYRIGHT	
MEASUREMENTS (Height first)	18¾ x 40⅝ INS. CMS.	NEGATIVE / BLOCK / SLIDE	
SIGNED DATED			
INSCRIBED		INSURANCE	
FRAMED GLAZED	FRAMED GLAZED		
HOW ACQUIRED	McLELLAN COLLECTION	DATE 1855	PRICE PAID
PROVENANCE			
EXHIBITED	Glasgow Corporation Minutes 1.5.31 (1657) - agreed to lend to Harrogate Art Gallery for loan exhibition Aug.-Oct. (Then attributed to Schiavone) (Cat. no. 26) on 'Salome going for John the Baptist's Head' by Schiavone RA 1934 Italian Art 1400-1900 (336)		



LITERATURE	Carlo Gamarri and Pierluigi de Vecchi, "Tintoretto", Milan 1970, col. no. 87 as "Episodio ... of 1542" Robert Echols 'Tintoretto, Christ at the Sea of Galilee, and the Unknown Later Career of Lambert Sustris', from Venezia Cinquecento Anno VI, n. 12 (1996) [attribs Tuccia to Sustris]
CONDITION AND RESTORATION	✓ 1954 notice of restoration on back.
RELATED WORKS	
BIOGRAPHY OF ARTIST	
DESCRIPTION, NOTES, Etc.	nothing on back. on frame. R.A. "Italian Art" label. Jan. 1st - Mar. 8th. artist - Schiavone.

Illustration 7: Record Card: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*



GLASGOW ART GALLERIES

RECORD CARD

ARTIST: PALMA VECCHIO SCHOOL OF

REGISTER NUMBER: ~~END OF REGISTER~~ 3182

TITLE: VIRGIN AND CHILD

MEDIUM AND SUPPORT: OIL ON PANEL

COPYRIGHT

MEASUREMENTS (Height First): 13 x 9 INS. 33 x 22.9 CMS.

NEGATIVE: ✓ BLOCK: SLIDE:

SIGNED DATED:

INSCRIBED:

INSURANCE:

FRAMED GLAZED: GLAZED

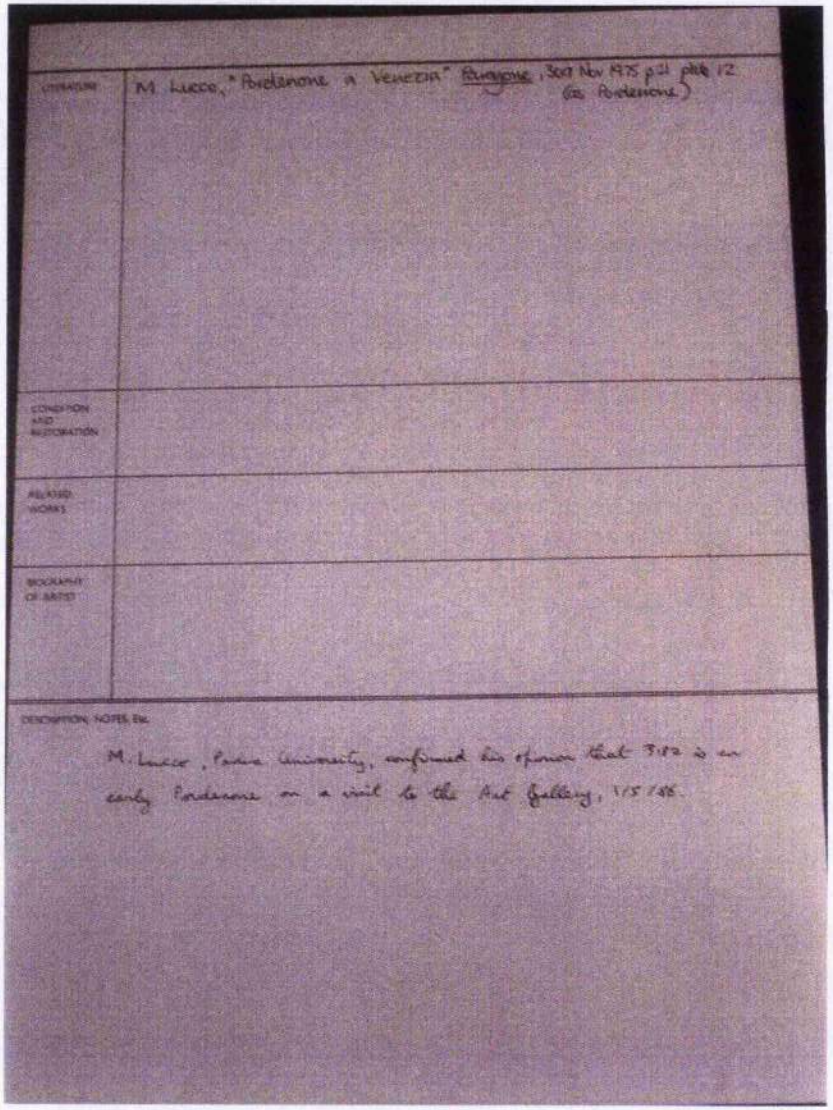
HOW ACQUIRED: PRESENTED BY MRS. J.G. COATS.

DATE: 1948 PRICE PAID:

PROVENANCE:

EXHIBITED:

COVER



CITATION: M. Lucco, "Pordenone a Venezia" Paragone, 309 Nov 1975 p21 plate 12 (as Pordenone)

CONDITION AND RESTORATION:

RELATED WORKS:

BIOGRAPHY OF ARTIST:

DESCRIPTION, NOTES, ETC.

M. Lucco, Padua University, confirmed his opinion that 3182 is an early Pordenone on a visit to the Art Gallery, 1/5/78.

Illustration 8: Record Card: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

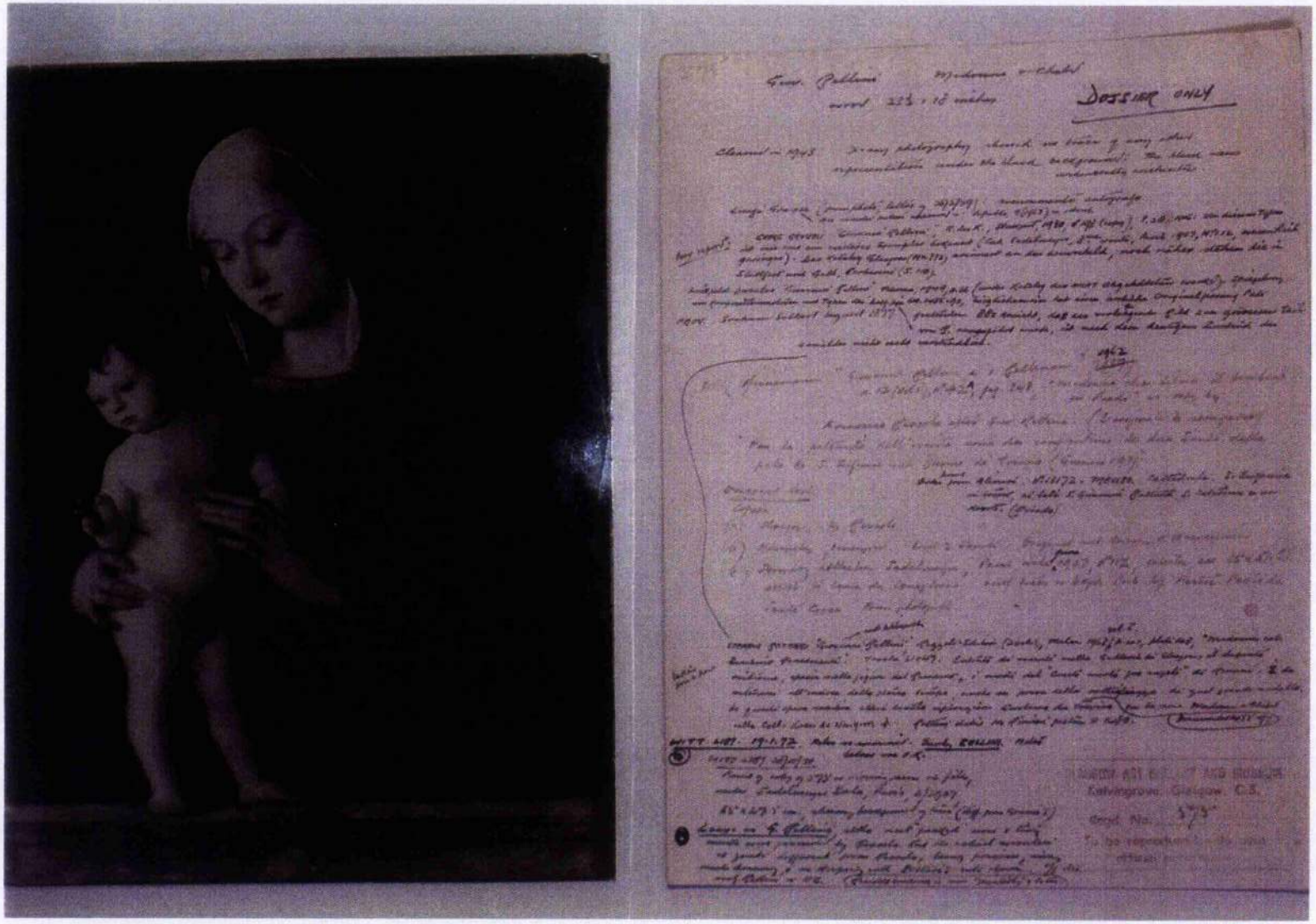


Illustration 9: Photograph (front & reverse): Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*
George Buchanan's handwritten notes

Giovanni Bellini VENICE c.1438–1516 VENICE

3 ½ *The Virgin and Child*

Oil on panel | 61 × 47cm | c.1480–5

Provenance: John Graham-Gilbert, Glasgow; bequeathed by his widow to the Glasgow Museum, 1877 (acc.no.575)

GLASGOW MUSEUMS: KELVINGROVE ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

The theme of the Virgin and Child was favoured by Giovanni Bellini above all others, and he painted innumerable variations on it during the course of his long career. Characteristically, the figure of the Virgin in this version is portrayed in half length behind a marble parapet, which serves both as a firm base for the triangular figure composition, and as a way of separating the sacred space of the figures from the real world of the viewer. Unusual in this instance is the fact that the figures focus their attention beyond the picture to the lower left, almost as if the Child was blessing an unseen kneeling donor. Relatively unusual, too, is Bellini's use of a dark, neutral background, instead of a curtain, landscape or sky. But X-radiography has shown the dark background to be original; in fact, Bellini employs it in several of his other devotional half-lengths, including the probably closely contemporary *Virgin and Child with Two Female Saints* in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice.

This picture has not been widely discussed in the art-historical literature, a neglect that perhaps reflects doubts on its autograph status,[1] and probably also the fact that it has not been seen outside Glasgow since it was acquired by John Graham-Gilbert in the mid-nineteenth century. It is true that the Virgin's robe (in which red glazes were painted over a layer of gold) and blue cloak have been extensively over-painted, presumably to compensate for damage to the original paint layers. The flesh areas are also a little thin in places, making the painter's hatched underdrawing visible to the naked eye. But the quality of these relatively undamaged areas is high, and the tender expressiveness of the faces of both figures can only be attributed to Bellini himself.

Suggested dates for the picture range between about 1475 and 1490,[2] and the picture clearly does reflect an interest in the volumetric style of Antonello da Messina, who visited Venice in 1475–6. Perhaps the date can be narrowed down most plausibly to the early 1480s,[3] to a phase immediately following Bellini's great San Giobbe altarpiece (Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia), datable to about 1478–80. As in the altarpiece, the physiognomies are more spherical and less elongated than in Bellini's works of the earlier 1470s; and while the painter was by this date experimenting with the new medium of oil, he retained a taste for silhouetted, rhythmically undulating outlines. By contrast, although the pose of the standing Child is very similar to that of his counterpart in the Frari triptych of 1488 (fig.7), by that date Bellini's forms had become much more softly rounded.

Illustration 10: *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*

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Titian PIEVE DI CADORE *c.*1485/90–1575 VENICE

13 & 14 *Christ and the Adulteress* and *Head of a Man*

Christ and the Adulteress

Oil on canvas | 139.2 × 181.5cm | *c.*1508–10

Provenance: Archibald McLellan; by whom bequeathed to the Glasgow Museum, 1854 (acc.no.181)

Head of a Man

Oil on canvas | 47 × 40.5cm | *c.*1508–10

Provenance: Private collection, Dumfriesshire; with Max Rothschild, London, 1927; with Agnew's, London, 1927; from whom acquired by Arthur Sachs, New York, 1927; with Agnew's, London; from whom purchased by Major Alfred Alnatt, 1962; sold Sotheby's, 30 June 1971 (lot 21), bought by Glasgow Museums (acc.no.3283)

GLASGOW MUSEUMS: KELVINGROVE ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

The famous and controversial *Christ and the Adulteress* has been cut down by some thirty to fifty centimetres at the right, and the *Head of a Man* represents a fragment of the amputated section. A fairly accurate impression of the appearance of the original composition is provided by a full-size, fairly literal early copy in the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo (fig.84). Restoration of the principal fragment of the original in 1952–3 revealed the projecting knee at the right edge, overlapping the woman's skirt, which had been overpainted some time after the painting was cut down.[1]

The story of Christ and the adulteress is recounted in John 8: 2–11. Seeking to trap Jesus into refusing to support Mosaic law, the Pharisees brought before him a woman who had been discovered in the act of adultery, and demanded that she be stoned to death; besides shewing compassion towards the woman, Jesus disarmed her accusers by saying 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' In the painting the scene is set in the open air, not in the temple, as is described in the gospel; and of the various bystanders, only the robed figure on the far left has the appearance of a pharisee. Partly for these reasons, the subject has often been identified instead as *Daniel and Susanna*.[2] This story is described in an apocryphal addition to the Old Testament Book of Daniel, in which the virtuous Susanna was falsely accused of adultery by two corrupt elders, but was saved from death by Daniel, who established the guilt of her accusers. Leaving aside the fact that this subject was very rare in art – unlike the quite common one of Christ and the adulteress – the visual evidence in the Glasgow picture simply does not support such an identification: Susanna was not brought before Daniel, who was still a young man without any position of authority, and who had uncovered the truth on his own initiative. Further confirmation that the subject is indeed Christ and the adulteress is provided by the following: Christ's leaning pose, as if he has just risen from stooping to write on the ground, as the gospel describes; by the medallion of a Roman emperor – presumably Tiberius – set into the wall above him; and above all by the traces of a cruciform halo around Christ's head, uncovered during the cleaning of 1952–3, and represented prominently in the Bergamo copy.

More problematic is the matter of the picture's attribution. For about a century after it was bequeathed to the Glasgow Museums, most scholars regarded it as an important late work by Giorgione.[3] But this was an expansionist phase of attributions to Giorgione, and it is now widely accepted that the physical vehemence of the figures, the range and intensity of the colours, and the lightness of the shadows have little in common with the small group of works universally agreed to be by him. Furthermore, if by Giorgione, it would have to be a late work, close to his lost frescoes of 1508 for the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice; yet it is hard to credit a major master at the height of his powers with such awkwardness of spatial construction and anatomical articulation. A minority of scholars has always been unhappy with the attribution to Giorgione, and in the decades around 1900 some alternative names were suggested, including those of Sebastiano del Piombo, Domenico Campagnola, Cariani, Romanino, and Titian. Of these, only the last has persisted, and is now prevalent.[4] One or two critics, however, remain unconvinced by the attribution to Titian, presumably because of the picture's admittedly uneven quality, and have proposed instead that it might be by Domenico Mancini, a minor painter who is known exclusively from a single signed work, a *Virgin and Child with an Angel* in the cathedral of Lendinara, in which the main figure group is borrowed directly from Giovanni Bellini's San Zaccaria altarpiece of 1505.[5]

The manifest faults of the *Christ and the Adulteress*, as well as its even more striking qualities, may be attributed rather to the fact that it represents one of the earliest large-scale works by a highly ambitious young painter who had not yet fully mastered his art. Although the movements of the figures lack proper co-ordination, they act out their parts with an impulsive energy. The complicated pose of the soldier on the left, seen from the rear, appears to be based on that of an antique statue.[6] The colours, which include expensive orpiment and realgar in the orange doublet of the central youth, and ultramarine in

Fig.84 | After Titian, *Christ and the Adulteress*
Bergamo, Accademia Carrara

Fig.86 | Titian, *The Miracle of the Speaking Babe* (detail)
Padua, Scuola del Santo

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Illustration 11: *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Giorgione, *The Adulteress brought before Christ*

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Workshop of Jacopo Tintoretto VENICE 1519–1594 VENICE

51 ✠ *The Ordeal of Tuccia*

Oil on canvas | 47.6 × 103.2cm | *c.*1555

Provenance: Possibly the Countess of Arundel, before 1654; Archibald McLellan; by whom bequeathed to the museum, 1854 (acc.no.189)

GLASGOW MUSEUMS: KELVINGROVE ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

Previously interpreted as Salome carrying the head of St John the Baptist, the subject was correctly identified as the story of the Vestal Tuccia at the time of the famous exhibition of Italian Art at the Royal Academy in 1930.[1] As a priestess of the temple of Vesta in ancient Rome, Tuccia was sworn to chastity. When unjustly accused of adultery, she undertook to prove her innocence by miraculously carrying a sieve full of water from the river Tiber back to her temple. Although recounted by several classical authors, the story was probably most familiar to sixteenth-century readers from the version in Petrarch's *Trionfi*, where Tuccia is described as running to the Tiber.[2] In this painting the artist sets the scene in Rome not only by depicting a classical ruin on the right, complete with a statue in a niche and a columned doorway, but by including the celebrated landmark of the Castel Sant'Angelo at the left.

The picture belongs to a sizeable group of small-scale pictures of horizontal format associated with the early career of Tintoretto and representing scenes from biblical or classical history. At the core of the group is a series of Old Testament scenes in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, datable to the 1540s, and usually described as *cassone* panels – in other words, as paintings set into dowry chests or other items of domestic furniture. The edifying theme of the present picture would obviously have been appropriate for such a purpose; on the other hand, the fact that it is executed on canvas rather than wood suggests that it is more likely to have been intended as a wall painting – perhaps as part of a frieze – than set into furniture. In either case, it is likely to have been paired with a representation of the story of Claudia, another Vestal who was forced by her accusers to provide dramatic evidence of her chastity. The format of the painting was originally even longer and narrower, but at some later date the composition was heightened at the top by about a third.[3]

Until the 1920s the Vienna group of panels was attributed to Andrea Schiavone, as was the present picture.[4] Since the Royal Academy exhibition of 1930, however, it has been generally accepted either as an autograph Tintoretto, datable to *c.*1545,[5] or else by a close follower, in which case it might date from up to a decade later. In favour of the latter supposition are the slack draughtsmanship and poorly articulated anatomies, as well as the apparent influence of Veronese in the use of blue draperies with yellow highlights. A possible candidate for this follower is Giovanni Galizzi, to whom a stylistically very similar *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (Greenville, SC, Bob Jones University) has recently been attributed.[6] Less convincing is an alternative recent attribution of the present picture to Lambert Sustris.[7]

Although there is no certain record of the picture before it was recorded in the McLellan bequest in 1855,[8] it is possibly identical with one described as showing a 'Roman woman carrying water to the Tiber' by Tintoretto in the inventory of the Countess of Arundel in Amsterdam in 1654.[9]

Illustration 12: *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The ordeal of Tuccia*

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ttributed to Domenico Capriolo VENICE *c.*1494–1528 TREVISO

1 ✠ *The Virgin and Child*

il on panel | 33 × 22.9cm | *c.*1515

rovenance: Mrs John G. Coats; by whom resented to the Glasgow Museum, 1948 icc.no.3182)

LASGOW MUSEUMS: KELVINGROVE ART ALLERY AND MUSEUM

n this little devotional panel the theme of the Virgin and Child as popularised in the late ifteenth century by Giovanni Bellini (cat.nos.3,), is updated in accordance with early sixteenth-entury taste. The foreground parapet is now tepped, as in a number of works by Giorgione nd the young Titian. The pose of the Child is nore self-consciously classicising, as if imitating hat of an antique statue. And the sunset andscape, with its picturesquely rustic buildings nd its mood of romantic nostalgia, corresponds o the ideal prevalent in the second decade of the ew century (see cat.nos.15, 16). As in Paris Bordon's *The Virgin and Child with Saints John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene and George* (cat.no.30), he traditional motif of the small bird held by the Christ Child alludes to his future Passion.

Generically attributed to a 'Follower of Palma Vecchio' when given to the Gallery, the picture has more recently been reassigned both to the young Pordenone, *c.*1512,[1] and to Domenico Capriolo, *c.*1515.[2] The close similarities of the facial types and the background landscape to the latter's signed and dated *The Adoration of the Shepherds* of 1518 (fig.101) make the attribution to Capriolo the more plausible; but in either case, the present work represents an attractive, although somewhat provincial response to the artistic revolution created in Venice by Giorgione in the first decade of the century.

Fig.101 | Domenico Capriolo, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, Treviso, Museo Civico 'Luigi Bailo'

Illustration 13: *Age of Titian* catalogue entry: Palma Vecchio, *Virgin and Child*

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Illustration 18: Italian art object files, Glagow Museums Resource Centre