

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM ACADEMY MYANMAR

2014 - 2019

01. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2014 the British Council has worked in collaboration with colleagues and partners in Myanmar and the UK to deliver International Museum Academy Myanmar, a British Council programme, developed to build the capacity of Myanmar's museum sector through research, continued professional development and policy dialogue. This capacity building programme has focused on enhancing collections management knowledge and skills so that Myanmar's heritage is maintained in the present and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

The programme has made a significant impact; many people from Myanmar and the UK have taken part, representing many museums, universities and organisations. Increased confidence in the management and care of collections has been demonstrated by participants and the effect is now evident in museums across the country. The programme has emphasized the importance of sustaining long term impact through peer to peer learning and support has been given to encourage participants to share newly acquired skills and expertise with those that were not directly trained by UK professionals. In addition, Myanmar and UK participants have worked together to determine how collections care and management can be reflective of international museum ethics and practice whilst establishing a Standards Framework that complements the context in Myanmar.

The British Council is committed to continuing the International Museum Academy Myanmar programme in collaboration with the Myanmar museum sector. We propose that, moving forward, the aim of the programme will be to continue to support museum practitioners in Myanmar to develop and share their professional skills so that they are able to manage and use collections to high standards for public learning, study and enjoyment.

'Collections management' is a term which describes the development, care and use of museum collections and their associated information for the benefit of the public.

Collections management is a discipline which requires skill, knowledge and experience

With effective collections management a museum will protect their collections for future generations to use and enjoy.

02. INTRODUCTION

Museums are an integral part of a nation's society; they collect, preserve, research, and communicate the tangible and intangible heritage of communities for public benefit. Those who work on behalf of museums have traditionally worked towards the preservation of collections, however, increasingly they are also recognising the value of museums as creative civic spaces where audiences of all kinds can engage, enjoy, create, and share using the unique cultural value offered by collections. This new role for museums, promoting social cohesion and community engagement, recognises museums as conduits for building collaborative relationships regionally, nationally and internationally, a role which is celebrated this year by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) on International Museum Day.

'The role of museums in society is changing. Once static institutions, museums are reinventing themselves to become more interactive, audience focused, community oriented, flexible, adaptable and mobile. They have become cultural hubs functioning as platforms where creativity combines with knowledge and where visitors can also co-create, share and interact.'

International Council of Museums, International Museum Day,
18 May 2019, 'Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition'



Museums in Myanmar hold some of the world's most beautiful and significant collections; they are treasure houses spanning the history of Myanmar and tell the story of the creativity and achievement of the people of the country. These unique collections and their associated information are cared for and interpreted by professional and dedicated museum practitioners who are committed to the care, management and interpretation of the country's heritage for the long term. The British Council believes that major benefits result from investing in the skills of these practitioners.

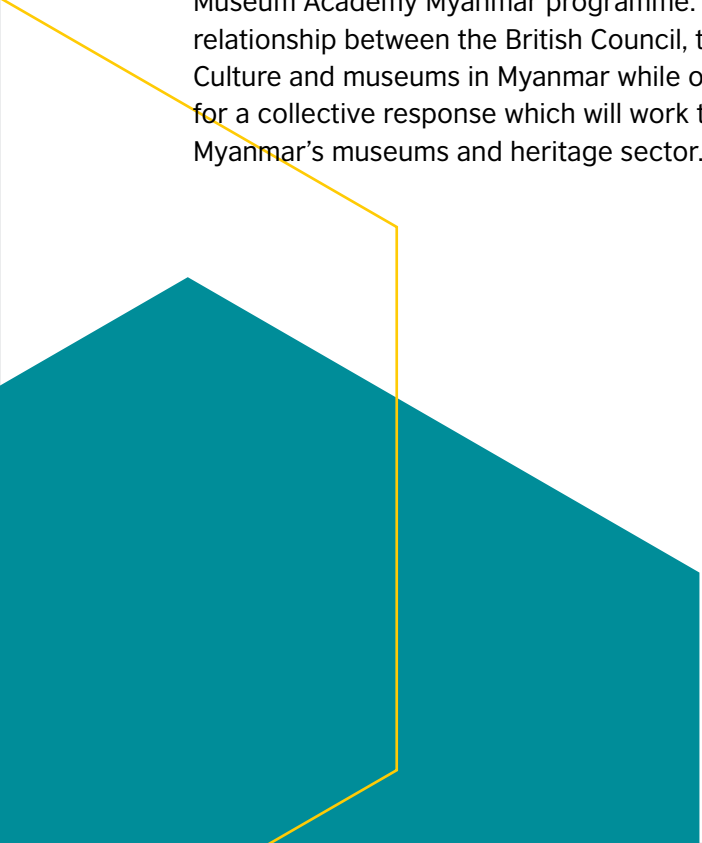


These benefits include:

- The fostering of international relationships
- Improved access to collections, nationally and internationally, through community engagement, tourism, digital platforms and international loans
- Increased participation by existing and new audiences in the use and development of collections and intangible heritage, with resulting social development and cohesion
- The efficient and effective management, care and use of museum collections by a highly skilled museum workforce actively involved in decision making

International Museum Academy Myanmar is a British Council programme developed in collaboration with the Myanmar Government and Myanmar museum practitioners to increase the capacity of Myanmar's museum sector through research, continued professional development, advocacy and policy dialogue. The programme builds on the investment made by the Myanmar Government in museum infrastructure and recognises the central importance of collections management and care in the changing role of museums across the world. It also acknowledges the initiative taken by the Myanmar Government in participating in ICOM and promoting good practice in collections management. The **Appendix** to this review gives detailed statistical information summarising the outputs of the programme.

This report reviews the achievements and impact of the International Museum Academy Myanmar programme. It looks forward to a future working relationship between the British Council, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and museums in Myanmar while offering several tangible next steps for a collective response which will work to further strengthen and develop Myanmar's museums and heritage sector.





The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Since March 2014 the British Council has been working in partnership to build the capacity of Myanmar's museum sector through research, continued professional development, advocacy and policy dialogue.

Through the International Museum Academy Myanmar programme, the British Council's Cultural Skills Unit has worked with colleagues in Myanmar to deliver the International Museum Academy Myanmar, an ambitious and creative programme which aims to:

- Work collaboratively with cultural institutions and policy-makers to improve outcomes for the heritage and education sector in Myanmar
- Provide opportunities to improve the professional capabilities and sector specific skills of Myanmar professionals
- Promote a better understanding of UK and international best practice



ICOM is the only global organisation of museums and museums professionals. It is an independent membership organisation, committed to the research, conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.

ICOM establishes professional and ethical standards for museum activities, makes recommendations on issues related thereto, promotes capacity building, advances knowledge and raises public cultural awareness through global networks and co-operation programmes.

ICOM encompasses:

- A network of more than 40,000 members worldwide
- A forum bringing together representatives of 138 countries and territories
- A think tank made up of 120 National Committees and 30 International Committees
- A non-governmental organisation formally affiliated with UNESCO

ICOM conducts its business in accordance with its Code of Ethics, and museum professionals to adopt the code into their practice if they are or wish to become members of ICOM.

Myanmar is represented at ICOM as one of the 119 National Committees. The purpose of the National Committees is to organize ICOM members at a national level and ensure the interests of museums and museum professionals in their respective countries.

<http://icom.museum>

03. IMPACT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM ACADEMY MYANMAR

The impact of the International Museum Academy Myanmar will be evident as the programme develops and the resources in the Myanmar Museum Standards Framework are integrated into the practice of Myanmar museums. The British Council notes the following changes recently happened in Myanmar museum sector:

- The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture has approved and supports the Myanmar Museums Forum, an idea which has grown out of the programme. The forum will enable the sharing of expertise in museum practice and will provide a catalyst for the improvement of standards and access to collections
- UK museum and heritage consultants have identified specific instances of improved standards in collections management and care in Myanmar particularly in collections storage and information management. They have also noted a strong interest in professional development and a growth in confidence on behalf of the participants on training days
- The Information Management Toolkit, developed through the programme, has been integrated into the curriculum of the current Postgraduate Diploma in Museology run at the National Museum in Yangon and accredited by the National University of Arts and Culture (Yangon). As a result entrants into the museum sector who have completed the diploma will have a grounding in Spectrum, the UK museum collections management standard
- The international Spectrum standard has been referenced as part of a recent Myanmar initiative to draft legislation relating to museums and collections
- The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture has approved a new Myanmar Department of Museology/Museum Studies for the National University of Arts and Culture (Yangon)
- The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture has approved an MA in Museology/Museum Studies, to be run by the new Department
- Cascade training, using standards drawn from the Myanmar Museum Standards Framework, was delivered after the recent conservation training. It has been successful and has encouraged museum practitioners to acquire and share new skills

- Links have developed between Myanmar and UK museum academics and practitioners. Practitioners have built informal networks which are active in museological knowledge sharing, communicating through Facebook groups, Facebook Messenger and email

'The most valuable outcome is that I learnt the importance of the documentation process for museums.'

'This training provided a lot of benefits - I learnt new techniques, knowledge, and ideas and was given practical experience.'

'I gained knowledge to apply within our museum from this training course.'

Comments from participants on *International Museum Academy Myanmar* training courses



04. RECOMMENDATIONS

The British Council is committed to continuing its work with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and the Myanmar museum sector. Based on our work with the sector we propose that, going forward, the aim of the International Museum Academy Myanmar programme will be to:

- Support museum practitioners in Myanmar to develop and share their professional skills so that they are able to manage and use collections to high standards for public learning, study and enjoyment.

The programme will deliver this aim through:

- Supporting (i) museology curriculum development for the new MA at the National University of the Arts and Culture and (ii) the relationship between the existing Diploma, new MA and the Myanmar Museums Standards Framework
- Supporting collections management skills development and knowledge sharing
- Developing the Myanmar Museums Standards Framework in collaboration with Myanmar colleagues

Supporting museology curriculum development at the National University of the Arts and Culture (Yangon)

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting the establishment of an alumni network for those who have taken the Diploma/MA
- Support for the developing curriculum for the MA in Museology to be run by the National University of the Arts and Culture (Yangon)
- Support for the ongoing Diploma and its productive relationship with the MA
- Succession planning for teaching staff on the Diploma and the MA, including for example through identifying and advocating for appropriate international training for key individuals to enable further development
- Working with international delivery and support organisations to provide cohesive skills development and training programmes to support teaching staff on the Diploma and the new MA
- Facilitating the inclusion of the Myanmar Museums Standards Framework in the Diploma and MA curricula

Supporting collections management skills development and knowledge sharing

This will be achieved by:

- Active participation in ICOM and encouraging Myanmar museum practitioners to become individual members and to join ICOM specialist committees
- Embedding the ICOM Code of Ethics in the Myanmar Museums Standards Framework
- Supporting the reform of the Museums, Libraries and Exhibitions Law so that it reflects international museum practice, international laws already adopted by Myanmar, the ICOM definition of a museum and the ICOM Code of Ethics
- Supporting the development of strategic approaches to museum development
- Supporting individuals to develop specialist museum skills and share their skills across Myanmar
- Support for developing a culture of continuous professional development within the sector
- Funding and support to send key Myanmar museum staff (especially conservation champions and those teaching on the Diploma) to the UK for learning and skills exchange
- A peer to peer mentoring programme developed by experienced professionals in the sector
- Funding to support an Integrated Pest Management Project. This would fund the collection of museum pests by museums and their identification by entomologists to inform improved pest management programmes by museums

Developing the Myanmar Museums Standards Framework in collaboration with Myanmar colleagues

This will be achieved by:

- Developing resources for the Myanmar Museum Standards Framework
- Publishing existing toolkits and resources from the Myanmar Museum Standards Framework online
- Developing an informal assessment model enabling museums to assess their performance against the Myanmar Museum Standards Framework
- Developing mechanisms for gathering data to measure improvement against the Myanmar Museum Standards Framework

APPENDIX:

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The British Council International Museum Academy Myanmar programme has increased the capacity of Myanmar's museum sector by:

- Research, consultation and evaluation
- Supporting museology curriculum development at the National Museum (Yangon)/National University of Arts and Culture (Yangon)
- Collections management skills development and knowledge sharing
- Developing a Myanmar Museums Standards Framework

Research, consultation and evaluation

Building on two initial research exercises in 2014 the British Council has worked with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and the Myanmar museum sector to understand the needs of the sector and target the delivery of the programme so that it is effective and relevant.

Research initiatives:

- 2014: Research project to explore the mapping of UK National Occupational Standards to working practices in Myanmar
- 2014: Consultation, study tour and bilateral meetings with 8 cultural institutions in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Bagan

Supporting museology curriculum development

Effective postgraduate training in museology necessitates the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in a wide range of academic and practice-focused areas of relevance to the work of the museum. At MA level, the requirement extends not only to a greater level of knowledge but also to a deeper range of critical, research and other skills. The British Council IMA programme has involved Myanmar specialists and UK museologists working together in order to develop curriculum structures, content and pedagogy that Myanmar practitioners consider appropriate to Myanmar's needs.

Diploma and MA Curriculum development

- March 2018: 3 day Diploma Course Development workshop, National Museum Yangon, 12 participants representing 2 museums and the Field School of Archaeology (Pyay). March 2018: 3 day Diploma Course Development workshop, National Museum Nay Pyi Taw, 15 participants representing 6 museums

- January 2019: 4 days MA curriculum development workshop, 15 participants representing 4 museums, the Field School of Archaeology (Pyay), the Department of Historical Research, and the National University of Arts & Culture (Yangon; retired members thereof)
- January 2019: 2.5 days research and consultation, meeting with key stakeholders in the MA development process, seeking to understand the needs and challenges for the planned MA, and identifying wider aims in Myanmar for training and academic research in and on the museum and heritage sector



Collections management skills development and knowledge sharing

Good collections management requires a skilled workforce with expertise in the application of standards and the decision making that needs to take place at museum level in order to preserve and use collections. The British Council has worked collaboratively with Myanmar museum practitioners to build awareness of these skills, focusing on the need for both practical and policy-based expertise by delivering the following:

Improving access to collections: skills development in Exhibition Development and Display

- March 2015: 2 day workshop, National Museum Nay Pyi Taw. 22 participants, representing 5 museums

Managing information about collections: skills development in implementing the Information Management Toolkit, information management benchmarking audits, knowledge sharing

- January/February 2017: Two concurrent 5 day workshops, National Museum Yangon. 71 participants representing 42 museums

- January/February 2017: Collaboration with Yangon University Museology Diploma staff to embed the toolkit into the Diploma curriculum
- January 2018: 3 day workshop and benchmarking audit, National Museum Yangon. 7 participants. Recommendations report for National Museum Yangon
- January 2018: 3 day and audit and benchmarking audit, National Museum Nay Pyi Taw. 5 participants. Recommendations report for National Museum Nay Pyi Taw
- January 2018 3 day workshop and benchmarking audit, Bagan Archeological Museum. 5 participants. Recommendations report for Bagan Archeological Museum
- January 2018 3 day workshop and benchmarking audit, Mandalay Cultural Museum. 5 participants. *Recommendations report for Mandalay Cultural Museum*



Collections management: training and skills development in leadership, policy making and planning; assessing the applicability of the UK Museum Accreditation Standard in Myanmar museums.

- March 2018: 3 Day Leadership workshop, National Museum National Museum Nay Pyi Taw and 3 day Leadership workshop, National Museum Yangon. 28 participants, representing 18 museums
- March 2018: 3 day Accreditation workshop, National Museum Nay Pyi Taw and 3 day Accreditation workshop, National Museum Yangon. 27 participants, representing 20 museums

Caring for and conserving collections: training and skills development in preventive conservation and knowledge sharing

- March 2018: 3 day Textile and Archaeological Object Conservation workshop, National Museum Yangon. 18 participants, representing 13 museums and the Department of Archaeology
- March 2018: 3 day Textile and Archaeological Object Conservation workshop, Bagan Archeological Museum. 14 participants, representing 9 museums and the Department of Archaeology
- January 2019: 6 day Preventive Conservation and Knowledge Sharing workshop, National Museum Yangon, 15 participants, representing 7 museums and the Department of Archaeology
- January/February 2019: Knowledge Sharing training sessions delivered by January 2019 Preventive Conservation participants, at 8 museums, coordinated by Kyaw Shin Naung, Assistant Director, National Museum Yangon

Specialist collections management equipment and resources used in training sessions and given to participants after courses to facilitate further knowledge sharing.

- Labelling and marking equipment
- Preventive conservation equipment
- A collection of reference books (approx. fifty museum and heritage studies books) provided to the Museology Diploma team at the National Museum of Yangon
- Course resources shared with participants (overviews, handouts, PowerPoints)



Developing a Myanmar Museums Standards Framework

The programme has taken the first steps in developing a Myanmar Museum Standards Framework in the form of Toolkits and supporting resources. The standards described in these resources, based on UK and international good practice and adapted to a Myanmar context, reflect the standards and practice taught and shared throughout the programme.

Toolkits and other resources have been created in English and Burmese to provide information about:

- Managing Collections and Collections Information
- Preventive Conservation for Museums
- Creating Collections Management Policies
- Information Management Frequently Asked Questions
- Labelling and Marking museum objects
- Labelling and Marking Kit Contents List
- Benchmarks in Collection Care, Storage section

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The British Council would like to thank everyone who has taken part in the *International Museum Academy Myanmar*, including:

Organisations and colleagues in Myanmar

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Museum Senior Consultant – Daw Nu Mra Zan, the training participants, participating museums from different States and Regions, and staffs from museums that host trainings and study visits and interpreters and translators

Organisations and colleagues in the UK

The British Museum, the Collections Trust, Royal Pavilion and Museums Brighton and Hove, the University of Brighton, the University of Cardiff, the University of Leicester.

[Amy Crossman](#), [Alex Dawson](#), [Sandra Dudley](#), [Natalie Evans](#), [Nicola Freeman](#), [Jane Henderson](#), [Susie Hillhouse](#), [Helen Mears](#).

The recommendations in this report are based on research and strategic guidance provided by Helen Thomas alongside findings and reports written after International Museum Academy Myanmar 2018 by:

[Amy Crossman](#), [Alex Dawson](#), [Sandra Dudley](#), [Jane Henderson](#), [Susie Hillhouse](#), and [Helen Mears](#)

The page features large, abstract geometric shapes in teal and yellow. A teal shape is in the top-left corner, and a yellow shape is in the top-right. A large yellow shape is on the left side, and a teal shape is in the bottom-right corner. The background is white.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

Page 4, 8, 14 (Boothee Thaik Htun)

Page 14 (Thwe Thwe Aye)

Page 12, 13 (Thin Aung Htoo)

We work with creative sectors around the world, creating cultural programmes and exchange, which leads to new opportunities and lasting connections with the UK.

© British Council 2019