

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Leicester (School of Museum Studies)</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Measuring visitors' learning in museums, libraries and archives</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>For decades, museums tended to describe and present their social and cultural value through simplistic measures such as visitor numbers; understanding the impact of museums on their visitors was elusive and there was no means of collecting this evidence and presenting it in a rigorous, coherent and useful way. The Generic Learning Outcomes model (GLOs) was developed as a tool for museums, libraries and archives to demonstrate the outcomes and impact of users' learning experiences. The framework has revolutionised the way in which visitors' experiences are understood by providing practitioners, government and funders with a meaningful way to describe and evidence the impact of museum experiences on visitors and to report on these collectively. This research has had a significant and lasting impact on museum policy and practice by providing both a language to describe and present the learning that takes place in museums and a flexible tool for capturing and measuring a range of visitor experiences across the cultural heritage sector.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) emerged from the Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP) (1). The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) – established in 1999 with the explicit goal of pursuing research that would directly engage with cultural institutions and policy makers and funders; shape museum practice; and benefit audiences – was commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (the MLA, formerly Re:source) to undertake LIRP as part of a broader initiative, <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i>, an improvement framework for museums, libraries and archives to develop more effective learning environments for their users. The research objectives of LIRP were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop an understanding of 'learning' and 'learning outcomes' in museums, archives and libraries informed by both current theoretical approaches to lifelong learning and contemporary practice in the sector. 2. To develop a limited number of generic methods/tools of collecting, collating, analysing and demonstrating evidence of these learning outcomes. 3. To develop an Evaluation Plan and Toolkit that shows how to use the tools in organisations across the sector on a regular basis, and how to collect, analyse and present the evidence of learning across the sector as a whole. 4. To add value to the Evaluation Toolkit through providing additional methods/tools of demonstrating learning outcomes that may be used to provide supplementary evidence specific to individual organisations. <p>LIRP ran from 2001-2003. The research team was led by Professor Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (PI), former Director of RCMG, and Jocelyn Dodd (CoI), Research Manager. Over 700 cultural professionals were involved in consultation and piloting of the GLOs. The GLOs were founded on the premise that learning outcomes are experienced by individuals but can be classified into five broad categories of learning impact (6, 7): Knowledge and Understanding; Skills; Attitudes and Values; Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity; and Activity, Behaviour, Progression.</p> <p>The GLOs draw on socio-cultural and constructivist notions of learning as a process of active meaning-making where learning is lifelong, involving the emotions and the intellect. The GLOs are designed to be open-ended and flexible in order to respond to a broad range of learning experiences that take place in museums, libraries and archives, and to take into account that the informal learning environment of cultural organisations makes it especially difficult to determine the outcomes of informal learning experiences where learners establish their own agendas (7, 8). Immediately following LIRP, RCMG was commissioned by Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to pioneer the GLOs methodology on a large-scale. Four national studies from 2003-2007 (2, 3, 4, 5) collected evidence of learning impact from schools and community groups using museums, involving approximately 70,000 participants. The research provided rich evidence of the significance and value of museum learning experiences, and demonstrated the robustness of the GLOs as a</p>

method. The results of this research, when presented as part of MLA's submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review (2004), was described by the Treasury as the 'most compelling evidence'. It played a significant part in securing an extra £15 million of public funding for the museum sector. Keith Nicol, then Deputy Director, Museums, Libraries and Cultural Property Division, Department for Culture, Media and Sport wrote: 'The innovative and well designed research of RCMG has provided valuable evidence and insight which has been used to inform Government policy in museum education'.

The use of the GLOs by professional researchers to carry out research and impact studies might have been an end in itself; however it was only the beginning of the take-up of the GLOs by the museum profession in the UK and beyond.

3. References to the research

Evidence of the quality of research: Outputs from the research projects described above were submitted as part of the RAE in 2008 in which the School of Museum Studies was ranked as having the highest proportion (at 65%) of world leading researchers compared with any other subject area in the UK. The scale of the projects and the range of funders involved is indicative of the pressing need for the research amongst cultural sector bodies in the UK. The research was funded through six related projects, with awards totalling £656,763. Research awards were provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS); the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA, formerly known as Re:source); and two regional museum, library and archive agencies.

Research outputs

- (1) Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2002), *Developing a scheme for finding evidence of the outcomes and impact of learning in museums, archives and libraries: the conceptual framework*, RCMG. (<https://swww2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/lirp-1-2>).
- (2) Hooper-Greenhill, E., Dodd, J., Phillips, M., O'Riain, H., Jones, C. and Woodward, J. (2004), *What did you learn at the museum today? The evaluation of the impact of the Renaissance in the Regions Education Programme in the three Phase 1 Hubs (August, September and October 2003)*, MLA/RCMG. (<https://swww2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/what-did-you-learn-at-the-museum-today-1>)
- (3) Hooper-Greenhill, E., Dodd, J., Gibson, L., Phillips, M., Jones, C. and Sullivan, E. (2006), *What did you learn at the museum today? Second study: Evaluation of the outcomes and impact of learning through the implementation of the Education Programme Delivery Plan across nine Regional Hubs (2005)*, MLA/RCMG. (<https://swww2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/what-did-you-learn-at-the-museum-today-second-study>)
- (4) Hooper-Greenhill, E., Dodd, J., Phillips, M., Jones, C., Woodward, J. and O'Riain, H. (2004), *Inspiration, Identity, Learning: The Value of Museums, The evaluation of the impact of DCMS/DfES Strategic Commissioning 2003-2004: National/ Regional Museum Education Partnerships*, DCMS/RCMG. (<https://swww2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/inspiration-identity-learning-1>)
- (5) Hooper-Greenhill, E., Dodd, J., Creaser, C., Sandell, R., Jones, C. and Woodham, A. (2007), *Inspiration, Identity, Learning: The Value of Museums, Second Study: An evaluation of the DCMS/DCSF National/Regional Museum Partnership Programme in 2006-2007*, DCMS/RCMG. (<https://swww2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/inspiration-identity-learning-2>)
- (6) Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2004), 'Measuring learning outcomes in museums, archives and libraries: the Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP)', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10 (2): 151-74.
- (7) Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2007), *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance*, London and New York: Routledge.
- (8) Dodd, J. (2009) 'The Generic Learning Outcomes: A conceptual framework for researching learning in informal learning environments' in Vavoula, G., Pachler, N. and Kukulska-Hulme, A. (eds), *Researching Mobile Learning: Frameworks, methods and research*, Oxford, Peter Lang: 221-240.

4. Details of the impact

A new approach to understanding and evidencing the value of museum experiences

The GLOs provided the museums sector with a robust and rigorously tested means of evaluating

and reporting on the impact of museum experiences on visitors' learning, a methodology that has meant 'continued high levels of both awareness and use across the sector' (10) amongst museum professionals, policy makers and funders across the UK. The focus on outcomes is significant for the museums sector: prior to the GLOs, museums demonstrated their value primarily through outputs (e.g. visitor numbers, number of exhibitions), an approach that failed to capture their social, educational and cultural impact. The GLOs provided a much more sophisticated and nuanced way for museum practitioners to understand (and ultimately to enhance) the learning experiences they provided for visitors as well as a rigorous way to collect and present credible and compelling evidence of the outcomes of their activities to funders and governing bodies.

By 2008, as Sue Wilkinson (then Director of Policy and Sustainability at the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) confirmed, the GLOs shaped the approach to museum education evaluation in 77% of museums in England (19). A report by the Culture and Learning Consortium in 2009 – *Get It: The Power of Cultural Learning* – (9) asserted that the GLOs were 'now used widely in the sector to plan and evaluate learning'. Since then, the GLOs have become increasingly embedded in the thinking and practice of museums across the UK. All museums in England in receipt of government funding (through *Renaissance in the Regions* and subsequent schemes, now administered by Arts Council England) were aware of the GLOs and the vast majority reported that awareness extended beyond their learning teams and had been used more widely in partnership programmes with other (non-Renaissance funded) organisations (10). Most reported using the GLOs to help shape their thinking about learning. 'Three quarters of Heads of Learning from Renaissance-funded museums consider that the GLOs have helped the sector to take on board a wider definition of learning, with almost as many feeling that the GLOs have given the sector a shared language to talk about museum learning' (10).

CyMAL, part of the Welsh Assembly government, endorses the GLOs framework as part of its grant programme and museums are encouraged to use it in developing evaluation for their projects (11). The Northern Ireland Museums Council (2009) (12) recommended that the GLOs be adopted as a standard quality and assurance mechanism across its museums. Museums and Galleries Scotland promotes the GLOs for evaluation by its members (13) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland used the GLOs in their 2009 project, *Treasured Places* (14). A growing number of UK Science and Discovery Centres have adopted the GLOs to measure the impact of their programmes (15), including Techniquest in Wales.

A tool to enhance visitor experiences

Although intended primarily for use by learning professionals in the museum sector to evaluate the impact of learning programmes with a range of visitors, the GLOs have gone on to impact the sector in unanticipated ways, most notably through their use to underpin the planning of major new capital developments in museums. For example, the GLOs underpinned the £47million redevelopment of the National Museum of Scotland in 2008-2011 (10). Indeed, many national museums have adopted the GLOs to inform their approach to a wide range of initiatives. The Imperial War Museum, for example, has embedded the GLOs into working practices across the museum. Since 2008 the Museum's use of the GLOs has become increasingly extensive and sophisticated across the organisation. The museum's staff use the framework to evaluate all their programmes, and to inform the ongoing development of their learning provision. The GLOs underpin the interpretive approach to all major gallery and exhibition developments, including the new First World War gallery which will open in 2014 (10).

Influencing cultural policy

Although developed specifically for use by museums, the GLO framework – by offering a flexible, rigorous and credible means of capturing the impact of cultural engagement on the individual – has significantly impacted the work of policy makers, funders and related agencies in the cultural sector. For example, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage with around £375 million per annum to invest in new projects, continues to encourage use by all funding recipients of the GLOs for evaluating the impact of their work (16). HLF's recently published 2013-18 Strategic Framework now includes a single aim and set of outcomes for people that have been informed by the GLOs. GLOs will also form part of the evaluation framework for the

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new Museums and Schools Programme, a £3.6 million targeted investment by the Department for Education in response to the Henley Review (10).

The influence of the GLOs has spread across the cultural sector beyond museums to organisations as diverse as the BBC, National Trust and the UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres. The latter looked to the GLOs as a methodology 'used extensively by most government-funded museums in England,' to develop a set of indicators to measure the collective impact of science and discovery centres (15).

The GLOs beyond the UK

The interest in the GLOs is not confined to the UK. Internationally, an increasing number of museums are looking at adopting and adapting the GLOs framework for their own contexts. For example, in Sweden, Malmö Museums used the GLOs to evaluate the experiences of children and teachers during a pilot project in 2008. Several other Swedish museums have followed, supported by training sessions on the use of the framework. The Swedish Exhibition Agency, Riksställningar, is using the GLOs in 2013 as a creative development tool for the museum/art/science/heritage sector, with seminars and training courses. In 2011 a study carried out at the University of Lund explored the relevance of the GLOs for the Swedish cultural sector concluding that they 'can help balance the economics-based discourse and put more focus on the qualitative aspects and values of museums and culture.' (17, 20) In Austria, the Exhibition Evaluation Manager of KIMUS Kindermuseum in Graz has used the Generic Learning Outcomes to evaluate their programmes since 2010 (18). In the US, the GLOs have been used to determine educational programme impact at the St Louis Zoo since 2012 (21).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (9) Culture and Learning Consortium (2009), *Get It: the Power of Cultural Learning*, Available online: <http://www.imaginate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Culture-Learning-Printed-Report-Web.pdf>
- (10) Graham, J. (2013), *Evidencing the impact of the GLOs, 2008-13*, Learning Unlimited. Available online at www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/rcmg/publications
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- (12) Northern Ireland Museums Council (2009) *Learning within Museums in Northern Ireland - Learning Report* Available online: <http://www.nimc.co.uk/research-and-publications/>
- (13) Museums Galleries Scotland (2013) *Inspiring Learning for All*, Available online: - <http://www.museumsgalleriesScotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-evaluation/how-to-carry-out-evaluations/>
- (14) Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (2013), *Treasured Places*. Available online: <http://www.treasuredplaces.org.uk/workshops/index.php>
- (15) The Association for Science and Discovery Centres (2010), *Assessing the Impact of UK Science and Discovery Centres: Towards a set of common indicators*, Available online: <http://sciencecentres.org.uk/govreport/docs/Assessing%20the%20impact%20of%20UK%20science%20and%20discovery%20centres:%20towards%20a%20set%20of%20common%20indicators%20%20May%2021%202010%20ASDC.pdf>
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- (18) Kindermuseum (n.d.) *Evaluation and Research*. Available online: - http://www.fridaundfred.at/cms/5780/Evaluierung_und_Forschung/
- (19) Former Director of Policy and Sustainability Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.
- (20) Independent consultant
- (21) Audience Research Manager, Saint Louis Zoo, USA