Why keep it if you can't see it!
An investigation into public and professional attitudes
towards collection care, access and utilisation in New Zealand museums.

BY

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Abstract

Increasingly museums throughout the world are seeking to work more closely with their communities so that their values, needs and expectations can be better understood. However, problems arise when professional and public understanding is out of step, as can be seen with the frequent popular controversies about museums supposedly ‘locking up their treasures’ in their basements. There is a perceived notion in current museum practice that stored museum collections need to become more accessible and utilised to a greater degree, without jeopardising the care of the collection. The access and utilisation of collections is addressed by museums in the name of public need, yet little research is done on what the public know or think about it. Within museum studies a small amount of literature has skirted around this topic but few have discussed it directly, or conducted research into public and professional attitudes to this issue. This dissertation addresses this gap by conducting original research which canvassed both the museum visiting public and museum professionals for their opinions.

The research design was based on both qualitative and quantitative methods: namely surveys, interviews, a review of current museum policy and practice and an analysis of new initiatives in collection development, access and use Internationally and in New Zealand. The data generated revealed a much clearer idea of public understanding from a sample of visitors, and more detailed individual opinions from key professional informants in two local museums in Rotorua and Hamilton.

This research will contribute to the literature on museum practice in New Zealand, help the museum sector to approach this often emotionally charged discussion with more information, and also encourage an important debate allowing the visiting public to have a greater say in what they think about the current access to and care of their local stored collections. The dissertation concludes by suggesting that the complexities and commonalities that arose out of all the opinions canvassed offer a framework for future solutions and strategies. There is an urgent need for further research on the thoughts and feelings of the public about collection care, access and utilisation so that New Zealand museums can embark on a journey that will take their stored collections out into the full light of the public realm.

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Introduction

Museums today are like trees in winter: their collections, like closed buds all holding their secrets. They need to become like trees in summer, their collections flowering in the minds of each visitor (Spalding, 2002, 167).

The above quote exemplifies the fundamental research question for this dissertation: how can museums take full advantage of their stored collections and how can they become more accessible to the public? In museum studies and museum practice, professionals and academics alike have pondered the problem of how to realise the potential of a stored collection for entertainment, research and educational purposes. As all museum practitioners will admit, only a very small fraction of an entire stored collection can possibly be on display at any one time a fact that sits at the forefront of a debate gathering momentum in the museum sector.

And yet, we frequently hear of controversies about museums locking away their art works and other treasures in dusty basements where no one can see them. It seems that the public have little real understanding of what museums do behind the scenes in looking after their collections. Many professionals similarly evince little enthusiasm for making ‘their’ precious and fragile collections better utilised. But at the same time, isn’t there a kernel of truth behind public complaints about access to stored collections? Can professionals do more to make these collections accessible to the public? The questions at the core of this debate are: what can be done to make sure that the public are getting the most from the stored collections of their local and national museums. Furthermore are the public even aware that behind the walls of their favourite museum there are yet more remarkable objects waiting to be discovered? Do the public believe that collections are being kept locked away in the depths of basements never to be seen because preservation and museum professional opinions rule over enjoyment of the masses? This is possibly the case due to the way in which this topic is often reported in media, most notably in newspaper articles. There appear to be several major articles published every year that dig at museum practice in New Zealand and the way in which museum collections are kept ‘hidden’. Articles such as ‘The art treasures hidden in Te Papa’s attic’ (Dominion Post, December 2010) conjure up in the minds of the public imagery that is a complete misrepresentation of the true situation of stored museum collections. Another article which followed in the same vein, published by the *Marlborough Express* in November of 2010 exclaimed ‘Put them on show!’ The article continues to berate *Te Papa Tongarewa*, New Zealand’s national museum on how they had previously promised, when it was opened, to showcase the country’s history and culture,

yet where is it to be seen when visiting the current incarnation of the museum? The article was published in response to the recent suggestion by *Te Papa* board chairman Sir Wiri Gardiner that a new national gallery should be built alongside *Te Papa* in order to house the entire art collection (Dominion Post, Te Papa chiefs call for \$100m home for Nations art, November 2010). The journalist continues to say that the 15,000 artworks should be put on display for the people who bought them – ‘ordinary New Zealanders’ (Marlborough Express, Put them on show, November 2010). This type of antagonistic approach is favoured by many journalists and sets the tone for the debate to be centred on the museum as an entity which should be pinned against another, the public. Rather than a balanced argument supported by the fact, this is however the nature of sensational journalism.

It is too simplistic, unlike many journalists will admit, to assume that collections should be all on display, all the time, for everyone when practically and environmentally that is impossible. There is a fine balance to be made here between preservation and exposure. Currently there are efforts being made by museums in New Zealand to strike a better balance and they are beginning to implement practices that have been specifically designed to try and resolve the issue. Yet who is the instigator behind these new museum collection utilisation and access projects? Are they propelled by public opinion or by museum professionals who think it is the right direction for museums to follow?

I came to this question after several years of visiting, studying and working in museums as a student of museum studies and a professional starting out on a career in collection management. While there is a great deal of debate about the issue of access to stored collections, I found that little original research has been done in New Zealand on the attitudes of museum professionals and the public. This dissertation investigates the central research question through surveys with the museum visiting public of *Rotorua Museum* and interviews with museum professionals at *Rotorua Museum* and *Waikato Museum*. It considers the opinions of the visiting public to *Rotorua Museum*, and how these relate to the attitudes of the staff who work at *Rotorua Museum*, and what themes arise from these two different viewpoints. Finally do any of these perspectives suggest any kind of solutions or initiatives that would work for this museum and New Zealand museums in general, in terms of making stored collections more accessible and better utilised. Furthermore is there a need for any solutions or are museums in New Zealand and their current approach towards collection access, care and utilisation sufficient according to the opinions of those surveyed?

Literature review

In this section, I survey the relevant literature in museum studies on this topic in order to construct an analytical framework for this study. If museum studies has been described as the academic analysis of museum history, theory and practice (Labrum and McCarthy 2005) then it might be said that everything *in* the museum, and indeed the museum itself, is an object of study:

Each museum site, whether it be the entire institution, the permanent collections and collecting policies ... the public programs, the retail store or the restaurant is ... itself a cultural artefact (Carbonell 2004, 2).

A number of anthologies have mapped out the parameters of this field over the last few years, focusing rather more on museum history and theory than practice (Carbonnell 2004; Corsane 2005; Macdonald 2006). Many museum theorists have critiqued the taken for granted conventions of collecting and display, the practices that have long been considered at the core of museum functions. For example John Elsner and Roger Cardinal have studied artefacts and collections in museums as part of ‘cultures of collecting’ which can be analysed as things that have beliefs, values and practices that are socially constructed and change over time in response to various factors (Cardinal and Elsner 1994, 2). This research focuses on museum practice rather than history or theory, and in particular on museum collections, but does so in a way which tries to integrate theory and practice. It has been argued that research in museum studies is not purely academic but feeds back into communities of practice in the workplace. As Labrum and McCarthy point out ‘practice should be understood as something that goes beyond mere day-to-day tasks and practical procedures – it could be argued that every time we carry out some activity or procedure, a theory or set of assumptions is in place to give meaning to that action’ (Labrum and McCarthy 2005, 11). It is hoped therefore that this study will contribute to an area of museum studies in New Zealand where there has been very little writing, but in doing so it will also contribute to museum practice by helping professionals better understand the museum sector they work in.

There has been a great deal of international writing about museum collections which discusses the issues of care and management, and sometimes the vexed issues to do with collection use, storage, rationalisation and development (Knell 1994, 2004). Scholars such as Weil have long warned that museums have ‘too much stuff’, and not enough storage space, and need to make what they have more accessible to the public (Weil). In New Zealand there has been little scholarship on these

issues, apart from a fine dissertation by Frances Speer which discusses the issues relating to collection use at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (Speer 2007).

The history of museums and their collections teaches us that they have not always been as they are now. There once was an era in museum history when everything was on display all the time. Every specimen insect through to every spear in an ethnographic collection ‘acquired’ from indigenous tribes could be seen hanging from the walls and filling the cabinets. As histories of New Zealand museums have shown, museums were stuffed full of miscellaneous collection on permanent display (McCarthy 2007). There was little change or rotation of exhibitions, merely the odd rearrangement of objects and a good dusting from time to time. Museums of the 21st century are of course not in the habit of displaying all their wares and instead have the opportunity to store parts of their expanding collections for future use. Museums once had the easy task of collecting objects simply to display them. However a new dilemma challenges the museum sector.

It is a well-known fact that only a very small percentage of any museum collection is on view at any one time. In turn there is a large volume of objects in storage facilities throughout the world that are not being seen. As *The Museums Association of Great Britain* states ‘Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment’ (Museums Association, 2010). Each of these objects not being seen is one less story being told, one less fact being learnt and one less chance for an exchange of knowledge. Therefore it can be said that the potential of these collections is not being met. The use of and accessibility to stored collections is at the centre of a debate gathering momentum throughout the museum and gallery sector.

The reasons are varied as to why access to stored collections has become a hot topic amongst the museum sector. It can be assumed that pressure from governing bodies such as governments and boards of trustees is one factor driving the discussion about collection access. Government and council run museums require a large portion of their funding to come from ratepayers and government grants, therefore there is an element of accountability that museums must address. If large quantities of money are going into an organisation it makes sense that the investor would want to see a return on this investment. In the case of New Zealand museums they must report on how funding is being used. A portion of this funding is spent on collections in terms of new acquisitions and general maintenance. Governing bodies are now expecting more from their investment and in order for money to be spent on collections museums need to offer more than five to ten percent of a

collection being on show. The expectation comes in the form of opening up collections and realising their potential as a fantastic resource even when not in exhibitions.

There is an increasing realisation that museums exist for and within communities. Their purpose is to serve these communities as best possible and by keeping collections locked away the public are perhaps not benefiting. It is of course not as simple as opening the collection storage doors, allowing the public in and hoping they learn something. Collections cannot speak for themselves and their potential lies in their interpretation. By harnessing the educational potential of stored collections a museum can assure its investors, both from the public and private sector, that their money is well spent. It is now a reality that museums must constantly challenge the ways they contribute to the greater community on every level not just in terms of exhibitions. If museums are to continue being considered providers of knowledge then they have to adapt to the ways they teach. This most certainly involves opening collection storerooms in ways that do not compromise the collections safety but in ways that allow the public to feel included in the process of caring for the nations objects.

In order to grapple with these practical problems in current museum practice, I have turned to some of the theory in museum studies which has critically analysed collections and collecting. H.S Hein states that ‘Chief among the activities traditionally attributed to museums is collection. Nothing has seemed more central and essential to the very being of a museum than its collection (2000, 4). So the question has to be asked why do museums create collections and continue to maintain an existing one? The first important point to take into account is that a museum is not a living entity in its own right; it is simply an institution of people who together help the museum operate. Therefore it is not specifically a museum that collects it is a series of people each of whom collect for the museum and in turn for the public. To put it bluntly, museums do not create collections people create collections. To view a museum as a group of people working in their own individual fields yet still working towards a common goal helps us to understand how a collection is actually put together.

Once again it must be asked why do these individuals or collection staff equally share the museums desire to collect and contain? Perhaps they share in the desire to collect because of what those objects have to offer the public in terms of an understanding and knowledge. As Alexander states ‘Most museums collect because they believe objects are important and evocative survivals of human civilization worthy of careful study and with powerful educational impact (1996, 119). This quote

seems to simplistically sum up why a museum would collect. Surely the value of each object in terms of what it represents educationally, historically and aesthetically is enough reason to collect it. This however raises the point why collect an object because one person values it when another person may view it as worthless? Essentially a museum is a group of people who need to establish guidelines for what makes an object important to the story of that particular museum. Phillip Bloom recalls in his book 'To have and to hold' a conversation he had with a stranger in a small café in Vienna. As the conversation progressed the subject turned to collecting, and the stranger informed Bloom that he collected disposable plastic cups. Taken aback by the stranger's choice to collect such a banal item Bloom asked why create such a collection? The stranger replied by saying he loved their translucent beauty, uniformity and the way they reminded him to look for beauty in unusual places because 'we must all learn to see the beauty of these things, of the ordinary...of the café, of the ashtray (2003, 235).

Although this collection may not be considered museum worthy what is important is that it tells a story about the owner and his beliefs and histories. The same should be said for a museum's collection—each object should tell a story and be relevant in teaching current generations something about themselves and about their pasts. S. Keene reiterates this point by stating:

A collection is only as useful as the information that is available relating to it. Any museum can preserve objects and display them, but it has been argued that only museums embedded in local culture can preserve knowledge about them' (2005, 40).

Stored collections are not only a treasure trove of stories and histories they are an invaluable commodity to the public and in fact the world as a research resource. If museum collections had not been created all those years ago by budding scientists, anthropologists, and archaeologists then much of what we know about human existence would be lost in time. By collecting specimens of human life whether they are social or scientific, museums have ensured that research can continue and the truths we believe about our existence can be challenged and debated. An object's story and meaning is never static, this can also be said for a collection. K Thomson makes an excellent point to reiterate this when he reminds us that 'objects held in our collections are not simply a series of static, fixed points in our culture... Instead, they are constantly open to interpretation and re-interpretation (2002, 3). It can be summarised from the points above that museums collect for a variety of reasons, not simply for exhibition but more importantly for research and perpetuity.

Tomson states that ‘Fundamentally, museums exist for far more purposes than simply to have and to hold cultural objects... Museums act as brokers and suppliers in the world of information (2002, 3). One can certainly agree with what Thomson is saying, museums do not have one sole purpose.

Most scholars would agree that museums were created around collections, and owe their existence to objects. Certainly museums would be doing a disservice to their communities if objects were simply collected and stored; yet this is not the case. Objects are acquired into a collection so that information exchange can take place. It is the objects that allow museums to supply the world with knowledge. They are the vessels that contain the research, the history and the secrets. To a certain extent it can be said that a collection is the heart of the museum contrary to what Thomson may think. A collection is the heart of a museum because it breathes in the history of the past, the social climate of the present and then breathes out knowledge, understanding, questions, and opportunities. A museum would not be able to do so if it did not have a collection of some sort at its centre. One principle that certainly will not change with the evolution of museums is the power of an object to inspire, tell stories, and to create questions. As Susan Pearce eloquently puts it ‘Objects can have about them a glow of significance, sending sparks of their own into the imagination of the beholder which kindles the desire for possession... like all magic, objects can bring about a transformation’ (1995, 172). It is this magic Pearce speaks of which sustains museums collecting in the hope that they will instil within a visitor the desire to start their own collection which will in turn aid future generations to understand the world we now live in.

It can be concluded from this review of the literature that the task of making collections accessible is neither a straightforward or simple one. Museums face pressure to constantly provide the best possible level of care for their objects but at the same time making sure their potential as a resource is not lost by keeping objects locked away. It is expected that museums have the needs of its community as a central focus but in saying that the safety and cultural integrity of their collections cannot be sacrificed. This balancing act between serving the community and serving the objects will never be straightforward and is a challenge museums will always deal with. As stated collection access is also about interpretation and remembering that objects cannot speak for themselves. As the *Museums Association* stated in their ‘Making Collections Effective’ report of 2007 ‘If museums are to reaffirm their role in communicating and generating ideas the question of how museums can access the expertise and knowledge they need becomes increasingly crucial’ (Museums Association, 2007).

In order for collections to have meaningful access, a bridging of the gap between the public and stored collections must be filled by experienced educators.

It is hard to predict how new technology and the innovative thinking of museum professionals will affect access to collections in the future. Nevertheless it is certain that many objects and their stories are yet to be unleashed onto hopefully a responsive public. Once again the *Museums Association* stated in their report 'Making Collections Effective' that 'collections have enormous creative potential, as sources of knowledge, as catalysts for ideas' (Cross & Wilkinson, 2007). However keeping items locked away in cabinets and drawers is depriving objects of this potential.

While the literature in museum studies on collections has little to say about the problems associated with access to stored collections, it has even less to say about possible solutions to the problem, and there is a notable dearth of writing about the issue based on surveys of either the public or professionals working in museums. The most useful works which will be referred to in this study, is a critical analysis of Keene on museum collections (2005), a book published by Knell on museums and the future of collecting (2007), finally the New Zealand focused study by Speer (2008) investigating a topic very similar to the one explored by this dissertation. This study will try to supplement these works and provide some original research on this topic by conducting surveys of public and professional opinion thus filling a major gap in the literature.

Methodology

This research project adopts a 'multi-method' approach. A multi method approach is in this instance useful in terms of carrying out observational research as well as surveys and in depth interviews. This may result in a large amount of data that is difficult to correlate and as Silverman states aggregation of data from different sources does not always add up to a more complete and revealing picture (2005, 122). However a single truth is not what is trying to be obtained, and by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods hopefully a range of opinions and ideas will be collected that, as Silverman suggests, will be able to be correlated to help explore the central research question.

The quantitative research process included questionnaires that were semi-structured in style and included set answer questions. Both the museum visitors and museum staff were surveyed, using short anonymous questionnaires which allowed the visitor to voice their opinions without being overwhelmed with big questions or ideas. Museum staff felt they could voice their genuine feelings

without any concerns of reproach or association from their managers. All surveys were completely anonymous and only statistical data about the participants' place of residence, age and gender were recorded. Surveys for the public consisted of a short questionnaire answerable using a yes, no or unsure. Although it does not allow nuances of thought to be recorded, this allows for a greater volume of people to be surveyed.

I personally conducted each survey with the chosen visitor, taking approximately three to six minutes with each. However museum staff were left to fill in the surveys at their own leisure, and then to be placed in a folder provided by myself, the surveys were collected once all were completed. Surveys with the museum staff were structured in much the same way as those of the public yet the questions were more detailed and had a greater range of answer options available. The qualitative formal interviews with museum management were conversely more in-depth and offered a range of answers that speak more on behalf of the institution they oversee rather than their own personal thoughts and feelings. The opinions sought from the museum directors and management were based around issues and concerns that are being faced by most museums in New Zealand, therefore making their responses representative of a New Zealand museum practice, thereby gaining a different perspective to both collection staff and the general public. This achieved, albeit on a small scale and with a small sample, a measure of triangulation in the study in that the issues were seen from three different perspectives.

There were several limitations to this research that should be mentioned. While conducting my research at *Rotorua Museum* there were many factors I had to take into consideration which affected the outcome of the survey. Firstly the physical limitations of the building had to be taken into consideration. The museum has next to its main entrance/exit a reasonably sized café. This was a major draw card for visitors who had been through the museum as accessing the café internally meant the visitor had to have admittance to the museum. A large volume of visitors would exit via the café as a place to end their tour and to enjoy the views. It was also a meeting place for many tour parties who had become separated and were slowly filtering out from the museum. The café was a place they would congregate rather than outside the main entrance. This meant that large volumes of visitors were excluded from the survey because they did not exit the main entrance where I was stationed.

Another major factor influencing the people I could question was that many visitors to the museum came as part of organised tours from independent tourist operators. Large tour groups were not easily

surveyed as they were often on a tight schedule and were not willing to have the group segmented to answer questionnaires. These tour groups consisted mainly of people from Asia and Europe. School groups were much the same as tour groups in this respect, their time at the museum was very structured and many teachers were reluctant to have students singled out for questioning. This meant that I missed out on getting information from the school students who use the museum frequently for educational purposes. Language was another obvious barrier, as many international visitors were not confident enough in speaking English to understand what my questionnaire was about.

When completing my research I was present outside the museum on both week days and weekends. This meant that visitors who were more likely to visit on weekends such as locals were represented as well as those who visited during the week which tended to consist of international tourists and retired New Zealand citizens. Obviously it is statistically impossible to get a perfect representation of each demographic group who visit the museum. When deciding whom to approach to conduct the survey, the only criteria for this research was that the visitor leaving the museum had their admittance sticker visible, ensuring they had been through the museum as opposed to simply visiting the giftware shop and leaving, as many tourists seemed to do.

It is also important to note that at the time the visitor research was completed at *Rotorua Museum* one entire wing of the building was under construction and being rebuilt. Therefore the museum was not operating at full capacity and what museum visitors were seeing was not representative of a 'usual' visit. The east wing of the museum, which at the time of surveying was being refurbished, could be described as being the most 'object rich' part of the museum therefore it is vital to note visitors were not seeing many objects from the collections that are normally on display. This must be taken into account when discussing the results from this aspect of the research. However, taking into consideration all the factors outlined above, I believe that the survey is still a reasonable and diverse sample, that the interviews were a useful exploration of professional opinion, and therefore that the study conveys the views of the people who were questioned about stored museum collections.

Chapter outline

Chapter One charts the international and national solutions and strategies that have to date been implemented by museums to combat the issue of collection access and utilisation. These solutions are discussed in terms of how they were implemented, why they were implemented and who benefits most from each solution. This chapter sets in motion the discussion of why collection access and

utilisation is becoming a contentious topic amongst the New Zealand museum sector. Chapter Two begins to look at how this discussion is not just an issue that needs to be debated by museum professionals but also needs to be a topic that the public should be further canvassed on. In this chapter the findings of research into the opinions of the public towards collection access and utilisation are discussed. These opinions are presented in balance with those of museum collection and management staff. Both sets of findings are discussed in terms of the similar themes which arise from the data and how they begin to highlight some of the complexities around the central research question. Finally Chapter Three concludes the dissertation with the issues that become apparent from the research which may affect the way solutions and strategies are implemented to address collection care, access and utilisation. Taking these complexities into consideration recommendations are made as to how New Zealand museums can begin to address their unique stored collection, in light of making them more accessible to the public and better utilised.

Chapter One

Home and away: Efforts made to address collection access and utilisation.

Introduction

As the introduction to this dissertation argued, there is an urgent need to conduct original research in New Zealand on the question of public access to stored museum collections. This chapter provides some background to this issue, by surveying international and national experiments in current museum practice in which institutions are making efforts to address collection access and utilisation. Around the world there are good examples of museums and other cultural institutions that are openly addressing this need for greater collection access and are finding solutions to counteract this predicament. Many New Zealand institutions are also taking note of these leading examples and adapting them to their own needs. The following chapter discusses International and New Zealand examples of institutions that have recently put in place a range of facilities which open their collections up to public use in new ways. Each of the solutions examined will be related back to how they address the issue and what the future possibilities of the facility are. Firstly I survey the international ‘scene’, as it may be put, and then go on to observe how it has created a framework for New Zealand institutions to follow.

International initiatives

One museum in the United Kingdom which is using forward thinking to address collection access is the *Victoria and Albert Museum of London*. Though their approach may appear modern at its core it resembles some elements of the past. In a bygone era of museum display practice, visitors used to find the galleries of the early 19th century institutions filled to the brim with every treasure and artefact the museum holds in their collection. For the most part a stored collection did not exist, because everything was literally on display all the time. Visitors were therefore visually overwhelmed with displays reminiscent of an eccentric private collectors studiolo. The “all on display all the time” approach made for a slightly uninteresting repeat visit and so gradually museums began to put more away in storage and less on display allowing for a rotation of object, and a division between front of house and back of house where the public had no access (McCarthy 2007, 19-26). Now at the beginning of the 21st century we are almost in a completely reversed situation where most

of a collection is in storage and only a small fraction is on display. As pointed out in the introduction, many museums around the world are responding to this situation by making their collections accessible in varying ways. *The Victoria and Albert Museum of London* is taking on many of the modern approaches towards making stored collections accessible, for instance creating an “online” accessible collection. Yet it is the historic approaches which they are embracing that is of most interest.

In the second half of 2010 the *Victoria and Albert Museum* unveiled their refurbished and enlarged *Ceramics Gallery*. What is unique about this gallery is that it has a dual purpose: firstly it displays the entire ceramics collection consisting of twenty six thousand pieces and secondly it is a functional and environmentally controlled storage facility. In affect the gallery is one large visible storage facility consisting of glass cabinets thematically arranged for greater cohesion when viewing. The gallery offers the visitor an incredible sweep of colour, design, decoration and history all displayed on and in glass cases making the collections of ceramics appear to be suspended in thin air. Judging from the images on the website, the overall affect is a visual feast for the eyes and evokes some historical sense of an eccentric collector putting everything on show to dazzle and assault you. There are however some issues relating to this kind of ‘invisible’ storage. In particular the issue arises as to what to do as the collection expands and is added to. In addition, will visitors make a return visit once they have viewed an entire collection or will they find the onslaught of information too much to take in and be discouraged from looking through all the display cases? These are all considerations the *Victoria and Albert* must have taken into consideration before embarking on such a display. In brief, for the issues that may occur in the future currently the ceramics gallery and its invisible storage offer a visual treasure trove which people frequent to become immersed in the incredible collection and all its glory.

The *Victoria and Albert Museum* is just one example of many institutions which have chosen to display entire collections on a constant basis. *The History Museum of Lucerne Switzerland*, better known as *Depot* since 2003, is in fact one large open storage display whereby objects are displayed as if they were in storage (Historisches Museum Luzern, 2010). The entire museum is dedicated to the display of stored collections in an interesting and entertaining way. On occasion special exhibitions from the collection are put together in some of the available spaces, often these displays involve local collectors and their collections. *Depot* may be a storage facility but in many ways the objects are not displayed as if they were in storage, as there is a certain element of the theatrical. This

is certainly enhanced by the daily tours offered every hour and performed by professional actresses and actors who bring the collection to life using costume. Visitors can also choose to interact with the collection by using a hand held scanner. Each object within *Depot* has a barcode attached which visitors can scan and then be presented with more in-depth information about that specific object. The collection is also certainly enhanced by the fact that it is housed within a five hundred year old building which makes walking through *Depot* more of an exploratory exercise. *Depot* offers visitors the opportunity to discover the collection in two very innovative forms—both adequately imparting the history of the stored objects. As we have seen there are issues in having an entire collection on display all the time however *Depot* somewhat avoids these by offering new varieties of tours each season and by engaging with collectors from the community to offer local visitors a reason to continue their connection.

Internationally one of the most interesting and intrepid examples of collection utilisation and access has to be found at the *Glasgow Open Museum* in Scotland (Glasgow Museums resource centre, 2010). As the name suggests this museum is open not only about allowing access to their collection but about taking it home as well. *The Glasgow Open Museum* is more of a concept and ideology than a place which exists to be visited. The museum does not exist in terms of a building with a collection, but instead is a collection housed within the *Glasgow Museums Resource Centre*. The centre operates as a collection depot for some of the museums, galleries and cultural heritage sites within Glasgow. In a bold move very relevant for this study, the *Open Museum* has created a collection of approximately four thousand objects that are allowed to be borrowed by community groups and individuals from the public, almost like a library (Simon, 2010).

There are three different ways one can borrow objects from the museum. Firstly, there is ‘reminiscence kits’ designed for smaller groups, with each kit dedicated to a different subject matter. The kit is equipped with objects, reading resources and photographs. These smaller kits are designed for people to take into their homes and enjoy the amazing opportunity of caring for an object of importance for a short time. The topics of these kits are designed to evoke common experience memories for instance, learning to ride a bicycle. The next stage of borrowing is handling kits. These were created with small community groups in mind where many people can experience handling real museum objects and learn more about a specific subject matter. The topics covered range from archaeology to entomology. Both of these types of kits offer a fantastic opportunity for members of the public to interact with and learn at their own speed about an object and its cultural or historical

significance. Furthermore, the type of kit borrowed can be tailored to the interests of different community groups. The final way in which the public can borrow from the collection is that groups put forward a proposal for an exhibition they would like to create—this may be for a public facility such as a library, community hall or even a hospice. The museum states that it will offer as much help and support as possible to facilitate the creation of your exhibition. In addition, all of the services available are free to the public. The trust and respect this museum is placing in members of the public to care for and handle objects correctly is truly remarkable. The objects included in the array of kits are not facsimile copies of objects or objects that are replaceable, many of the kits contain ancient artefacts and very fragile relics. The connections made between members of the public, the objects and in turn the larger stored collections are invaluable. By offering the public the opportunity to care for and correctly handle objects of national significance, the museum is instilling in those people the importance of being guardians of objects, which in theory belong to them anyway.

In effect the *Open Museum of Glasgow* is simply sharing the responsibility of caring for objects and in doing so are allowing a much larger group of people access to collections which they may otherwise not ever see. What makes this concept for utilising stored collections unique is the willingness of the *Open Museum* to allow their kits to go almost anywhere within the community, breaking down the traditional notion that collections should be either on display in a museum or be cared for in a store room. Despite the fact it is challenging for museum professionals, I believe it is an inspiring initiative to think that an elderly person in a hospice or child in a special care facility, who may not be able to visit a museum, can interact with objects and their histories and be enriched by the real connection offered. The elderly person is given the opportunity to connect and reminisce about stories from their past and the child's imagination runs wild as they learn about ancient Rome and all its curiosities.

The *Open Museum* and their innovative use of stored collections is just one example of how the *Glasgow Museums Resource Centre* addresses collection access and utilisation. The centre acts as repository for the collections of many cultural institutions of Glasgow city. The centre was purpose built to house the collections in one centre to allow greater control over the access and care of the city's treasures. The centre was developed in such a way that all the collections are easily accessible and open for viewing on a daily basis. Although all tours must be booked in advance there are an endless array of tours available. There is a daily hour long tour available as well as a series of themed tours planned for certain dates over the months. For instance one of the hour long tours take visitors

on a journey through the highlights of the art collection, this tour is repeated every Thursday of the month. There are opportunities to delve deeper into certain topics with visiting experts from the surrounding museums. On the last Sunday of every month Family and Friends day is held, an opportunity to drop into the stored collection facility and partake in an interactive and child friendly tour followed by a creative workshop that is inspired by objects from the collections. There is a tour topic for a wide audience of people and for no charge members of the public can take in the sight of their city's collection in one tour offered daily.

The city of Glasgow has been one of the most progressive examples of international museums which have taken up the vision of a singular storage facility which is strongly grounded in principals of openness and accessibility. The museum's approach towards the stored collection in terms of access has been very focused on community, so much so that their collection almost resembles an outreach programme. Their underlying principal has been an open book policy, there are no mysteries surrounding what they have in their collection, where it is kept or for whom. There is a real sense that the *Glasgow Museums Resource Centre* exists more for the public than the museums whose collections are stored there. By handing over a sense of ownership to the public in allowing them to effectively 'borrow' parts of the collection there is a mutual respect gained. Instead of a relationship based on the traditional format of museums 'owning' objects and the public being passive viewers of the object, Glasgow residents are able to become 'owners' of the collection as well and in turn possibly feel less like visitors and more like custodians and receptacles of the knowledge and histories each object contains. In my view, the *Glasgow Museums Resource Centre* and *Open Museum* is definitely one of the most forward-thinking and community-focused stored collection facilities in the world.

Variety and change are two elements that can encourage the public to continually access collections whether it is through guided tours or online access. However another vitally important factor is the personal connection formed between the visitor and the museum, a personal connection which permeates the walls of the museum is carried through into the lives of visitors once they leave. *Brooklyn Museum of New York* is trying to achieve these personal connections through their online collection facility (Brooklyn Museum, 2011). One of the largest art museums in the United States of America, *Brooklyn Museum* has a truly impressive collection of art from nearly every Western and non-Western culture. A small fraction of this amazing collection is available to be viewed online—consisting of approximately 95,000 records. Their commitment to share as much of the collection

with a larger audience is echoed in their mission statement which states that they are required ‘to act as a bridge between the rich artistic heritage of world cultures as embodied in its collections, and the unique experience of each visitor’ (Brooklyn Museum, 2011).

A visit to the website demonstrates that the *Brooklyn Museum* online collection allows visitors to continually feel connected and participating in the museum once they have left. The museum also openly recognizes the knowledge and perspectives their visitors already have about objects in the collection and is actively incorporating these into how their online collection is categorised. This allows visitors to the site to search through the collection by topics added by other users and can in turn add their own topics relating to specific objects. However the personal and interactive connection with this online collection is made by becoming a ‘Posse’ member. In effect by becoming a posse member you are becoming part of the museum staff enabling users to add to records and change categorisations. ‘Posse’ members have the ability to play either ‘Tag your it’ or ‘Freeze Tag!’. The first allows users to be given random objects from the collection to ‘Tag’, once they have added as many tags as best describes the work they can move on to the next object and the tag tally bar on the side of the screen displays how one compares against other Posse members in the tagging stakes. The top tagger to date had submitted over 8000 tags for different works of art and so the game can become very competitive and addictive for users. ‘Freeze Tag!’ is another collection based game allowing posse members to review tags submitted by other users and decide whether they are suitable for the work of art, if deemed not appropriate by enough members, the tag will be frozen and removed. Not only can Posse members add tags to objects they can also add comments to works if they have extra information about an object. As a Posse member participants have their own profile that is viewable on the online collection which allows them to pick favourites within the collection and to profile their comments. Members also have the opportunity to take part in a blog and to connect via social networking websites.

Most recently the *Brooklyn Museum* has added the feature of accessing the tagging component through mobile devices opening a new application called “Gallery Tag”. This application works slightly differently to the online collection facility in that it requires a user to firstly choose a tag a user has already created then find works from throughout all the galleries that they feel match this tag. This data is then converged with the online collection bridging the physical and the virtual. *Brooklyn Museum* has, like many museums throughout the world, digitised their collection to reach a wider audience. In contrast to most institutions, *Brooklyn Museum* felt that simply putting their

records online was not enough for visitors to feel they were being engaged on more than a visual level. The unique tagging system has created a community of people from around the world, many of whom have never even visited the museum, who can regularly interact with the online collection and the people who contribute towards it. By allowing the museums online collection viewers to have a say towards how the objects are categorised, it builds a new basis for searching the online collection which may develop new audiences as they are categories created *by* people like them *for* people like them.

New Zealand initiatives

If the international examples assessed above show many encouraging new approaches to the central problem examined in this research, then the local examples are perhaps not as advanced but nonetheless positive in following some of the leads from museums overseas. The first example is from a temporary exhibition at a major metropolitan museum which played with visitor fantasies about dark and mysterious museum storerooms. A visual spectacle of the weird, wonderful and magnificent? Releasing the dusty treasures from their dark prison of storage? Allowing the magic of their stories to shine in the new light of day for all to see? The *Secrets* exhibition displayed at *Auckland Museum* (November 2009 – April –2010) set out to achieve all of the above and more. The exhibition displayed objects specifically chosen on the basis that they had never been seen before or had not been viewed by the public in a very long time, to help tell the wider story of how they are cared for, stored, conserved, registered and ultimately displayed was the main brief for this exhibition. This was an intriguing idea never seen before in a New Zealand museum and especially not told in such a theatrical way (Auckland Museum, 2010).

The *Secrets* exhibition directly addressed the process an object travels through from the moment it arrives at the museum, a story that every single object must travel. It began with explaining the process of un-crating. The feeling of mystery is dramatically enhanced in this area of the exhibition, as if to suggest one never knows what may be within a crate or a box, and therefore great care must be taken. This area sets the entire tone for the exhibition beginning with the overwhelming notion that working in a museum is a sometimes hazardous and indeed exciting occupation. A theatrical tone now set, visitors are introduced throughout the exhibition to vital principles of collection management such as correct storage procedures, methods of registration, techniques of conservation, the fundamentals of research and finally the importance of exhibition. Each stage of the exhibition is

an individually crafted experience, where a culmination of striking lighting effects met widely dramatic displays all to great effect. Each segment of the exhibition took the visitor through an experience where the special objects chosen for display came alive and inspired the imagination to ponder what other great objects were still hiding away in the basement. The theatrical way in which the exhibition explained the principles of collection management were exaggerated for effect and only slightly resembled the reality of working in a collection store. Obviously to simply tell the story of how an object progresses into a museum collection would be un-imaginative and quite possibly dull, therefore it is easy to understand why *Auckland Museum* and its curators took a more fun and unusual approach. By incorporating objects from the collection which many of the public will never have seen before it opens the possibility of explaining more about stored collections under the belief that the visitor is seeing something ‘new’ and not to be missed. The act of titling the exhibition *Secrets* indicates that *Auckland Museum* was trying to build intrigue around the exhibition, as if to say they are letting the visitor in on a secret about what happens behind closed doors. The unique mix of these factors discussed so far resulted in a hugely successful exhibition, which was extended in duration due to high visiting numbers.

Nevertheless it has to be asked what prompted *Auckland Museum* to undertake such an exhibition? According to the director of *Auckland Museum* of the time Dr Vanda Vitali, due to round table meetings with the Auckland public there was a need expressed for more of the stored collection to be seen but in what capacity it was not certain. It was Vitali’s vision to bring to light the stories of some of their most unusual and spectacular objects within the collections and with the help of the museum staff stories and cases for different objects were submitted as to why they should be shown. It certainly could be said that the exhibition was the result of public consultation but more so Vitali’s understanding of an international trend towards explaining to the public where their taxes are being spent in terms of stored collection care, and to inspire in them an excitement about what is being cared for and hopefully the importance of such work (Auckland Museum, 2010). This exhibition was designed to help address the possible misconception of how museums care for their objects and the processes they must go through to acquire a new object into a collection. It certainly informs the visitor about collection management and the unique techniques collection staff employ to make sure an object is correctly cleaned, stored and in turn displayed. This story is told using some truly astonishing objects from the various collections and it cannot be denied that the visual spectacle is at times breath taking and truly fascinating.

However it is important to ask was this exhibition too grounded in the idea of being entertaining and dazzling rather than informative? It must be said that the content of this exhibition was designed to wow the audience into submission rather than to clearly explain stored collection management. One cannot help but feel that the visual spectacle of the exhibition somewhat perpetuates the myth that collection stores are dark mystical places, where objects can be lost in the mists of time. The exhibition also did the museum no justice in terms of explaining the purpose of caring for and collecting so many objects. By displaying some of their more unique and weird collections the visitor was surely prompted to think why am I only just seeing this now and what will happen to it when the exhibition finishes? Questions such as: What is the point of objects existing in a collection where they are never seen? Surely these questions must have arisen amongst visitors, and indeed what was the commitment made at the end of this exhibition to visitors about the future of their nearly four million stored objects? The exhibition offered no comment on what Auckland Museum's approach towards collection utilisation would be in the future or if in fact the *Secrets* concept could be something adapted for future use. There was no point of reference offered to visitors so they could have some of their questions answered. On November 2010 interim director Sir Don McKinnon introduced a new initiative to focus more time and money on collection research and use; this came about well over a year after the exhibition closed (Auckland Museum, 2011). The *Secrets* exhibition concluded in a whimsical display of puppets and theatre seats, which ironically symbolised the overall tone of the exhibition, a beautiful theatre piece with objects performing like puppets to help tell a story. The success of an exhibition cannot be merely measured in attendance numbers but also by the type of message and information which is absorbed. The same can be said for online collections.

I turn now to consider the question of online and digitised collection and begin with the *Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* (Te Papa) in Wellington (Museum of New Zealand, 2011). *Te Papa* has endeavoured like many museums to capture segments of their important collections and put them online, seen as the most logical step in making the stored collections of *Te Papa* more accessible to the public. Taking the lead from international examples *Te Papa* is well on the way to having a substantial amount of their stored collections available for viewing on their website. Under the banner of cultural heritage alone there are approximately 180,000 objects already digitised and loaded. The online collection access facility is continuing to grow not only in size but also in terms of detail. The way in which a user can search the collections has developed immensely, as has the way in which visitors to the site can identify links between objects within different collections. There is

little to fault with the layout of this tool and the first page visitors are confronted with gives them a selection of random objects to entice them into specific areas of interest. Within each collection category there are many 'topics' where users can read extensive information about that specific topic and the objects affiliated to it.

Te Papa has also joined the trend of allowing users to comment or like objects through popular social media tools such as 'Twitter' or 'Facebook', giving a more community based feel to the online collection tool. Obviously not all objects have detailed information attached, however as a tool which is open for future development the facility is an excellent building block for something truly great in the future. Slowly but surely *Te Papa* is working at the details of this tool which will hopefully lead to greater use by the public and in turn a better understanding of what their collections hold. At this stage of development it is easy to see why it may not be a popular tool for the public, as many of the objects lack the cultural and social stories which may be attached to them and present when normally being exhibited. The value of an object listing, which appears to be nothing more than a Vernon or KE EMU record, to a member of the public is no doubt little. This is where the problem with online collections begins. Is simply having an object online worth the resources if it does not engage the viewer on more than a visual level? Also is it too simplistic to hope that the visiting public will find an object as interesting once you take it out of the context of an exhibition or museum space? These are both important questions that need addressing and will be the measure of whether an online collection tool is a success. Online collections are certainly the beginning point for addressing the issue of how to make collections more accessible, but it is vital to address how they will be accessed, by whom and for what purpose. In answering these questions the development of online collections can only be improved.

Clearly the online collection facility does not merely exist for the public but also for other museum professionals wishing to access the collection. A response to the desire of museum professionals and the public to access more than one online collection at a time was the creation of *Matapihi* an online access point where over one hundred and fifty contributors allow their online collections to be accessed through one search portal. This search facility is produced by *National Digital Forum* a group established under the government body *Digital New Zealand*. Created by the need for public services in a digital age *Matapihi* is primarily concerned with connecting institutions and their collections from within the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector. What *Matapihi* achieves in terms of allowing the user to search through different Museum's collections is

somewhat marred by the lack of interactivity the website allows. *Matapihi* is little more than a search tool that redirects the user to different museums online collections. The need for allowing user interaction was a concept *National Services Te Paerangi* incorporated into their own online collection search tool titled *NZMuseums*. As the website banner describes it allows the user to find museums, explore collections and share stories. Not only can users of the site search for objects from seventy-nine museums and galleries but searching for a particular topic requires visiting different museum websites. Instead object listings form almost a national collection under the banner of *NZMuseums*. The website also offers visitors a small opportunity to interact with each object listing in the form of adding a comment about the object or perhaps adding your own ‘tag’ allowing the object to be searched for under a different category.

NZMuseums is a leading example of how online collections in New Zealand can begin to resemble a national collection that is accessible by the public (NZMuseums, 2011). This kind of database offers a truly incredible building block for the creation of a multi-layered experience for the online user. Currently object listings in online collections are one-dimensional and are not in line with the way in which interactive media is developing. There is an increasing desire by Internet users to connect with online resources on a more personal level, for content to be multi layered and in many ways user defined. As discussed earlier *Brooklyn Museum* is reacting to this trend and allowing their online collection visitors to define how collection objects are labelled and how collections should be searched. This is one element of interactivity which *NZMuseums* has picked up on and used. There are still a great deal more tools that could be utilised in order to make online collections more engaging and connective. There is a level of personalisation that could be incorporated into the websites in the form of membership. Many other networking and social interactive sites such as ‘YouTube’ for example remember the types of videos a user enjoys watching and suggests other items which may be of interest. This creates a link between user and website which allows for a relationship to build into much more than just one visit, for example the inclusion of blogging, vlogging, and uploading videos. It is also of concern that the online collection facility is already falling behind in an increasingly fast paced online media world due to the time it is taking for collections to be digitised and made available online, at an adequate level. Once again the most important issue surrounding online collections is surely the balance of quality and quantity. An online tool such as *Matapihi* and *NZMuseums* is only as good as the online collections they support.

A museum's stored collection available for access online, as noted above, is certainly a valuable tool for the public to gain a greater understanding of what a museum's collection contains. But there still must be something said for the wonder of beholding an object in reality—this was certainly expressed within Auckland Museum's *Secrets* exhibition. There is also something neither an exhibition nor an online catalogue can convey to a member of the public and that is the unique environment of a stored collection. Collection store or back of house tours as they are often referred to are now a mainstream aspect of Te Papa's guided tour range. The opportunity to investigate what lies behind the closed doors of a stored collection is certainly fascinating for some and often attracts special interest groups with a particular subject in mind. The tours are arranged on a demand basis rather than running regularly so future planning is needed for a visitor to take advantage of such a tour. Many other museums in New Zealand have adopted this approach in order to make their collections more accessible. *Rotorua Museum* for example also allows tours of their stored collection which is all housed in one offsite storage facility. Neither of these museums openly advertise the tour possibility to visitors as it something which requires special planning and is possibly more suited to a local community base, for example school groups. There are also many other factors to contend with when offering collection tours, for example the delicate environment within which collections are housed, the space available for visitors to participate, the numbers of staff available to take the tour and the fact that staff office space is often located within a collection store.

When all these issues are taken into consideration it is easy to see why stored collection tours are *possibly not* the most efficient way of allowing the public to access a stored collection. What they do offer the public is the opportunity to gain an understanding of what a stored collection looks like, the way it is cared for and by whom. It is also a fantastic opportunity for the public to see items that are possibly of personal interest and in turn they may even forge a connection to that collection that can develop into a greater interest for that particular museum. Greater understanding of what a museum's stored collection is can only be helpful in terms of public appreciation of what a museum really does for the community.

An interesting example of a large regional museum that openly promoted stored collection tours in the hope of building community connections was *Waikato Museum* in Hamilton (<http://www.waikatomuseum.org.nz/>, 2010). As pointed out earlier, if stored collections are open to the public then perhaps their overall interest in the museum will increase as they feel personally connected to certain objects. *Waikato Museum* agreed with this idea and for a year running

throughout 2008 and 2009 advertised their collection in large popular circulation magazines. It was by no means a comprehensive campaign but members of the public from all over New Zealand would have seen the advertisements. Director of *Waikato Museum* Kate Vusoniwailala confirmed that since the year long campaign there had been no marked increase in the number of stored collection tours, and the museum continued to receive bookings from mainly locally based groups. The programme was dropped and the Museum no longer advertises the possibility of a tour on their website. Put simply by Vusoniwailala, the lack of interest lies possibly in the fact that the public did not know what to expect: Were they going to be entertained or wowed and was it possibly of no relevance to them at all? As mentioned previously, international examples of collection tours have had to find creative ways of making the tours more appealing to visitors such as the theatrical tours offered by *Historisches Museum in Luzern*. In terms of an interesting and engaging experience stored collection tours are having to compare with other means of entertainment. This is certainly reflected in the way exhibition design has evolved in recent years, therefore perhaps the strategy behind the collection tour needs to adapt.

In conjunction with the advertising which *Waikato Museum* released to promote their collection tour facility, the museum designed and featured an exhibition that focused upon the mysterious world of a collection storage facility. Entitled *Great Collections: From matchbox to telephone box* the exhibition ran from June through to September 2008 (Waikato Museum, 2011). A precursor to the *Secrets* exhibition, this was not a theatrical affair filled with dramatic lighting, but more an expose on what the inner working of a storage facility looks like. The exhibition space was filled amongst other things with a work desk and fully functioning computer set up with the Vernon database, at different points of the day staff would actually undertake object cataloguing work in the exhibition space. In order to allow visitors the chance to see what happens when objects are accessioned the computer screen was projected onto the above wall. Each fortnight in the *Waikato Times* a column from a curator is published featuring an object from the collection; these articles were included in the exhibition along side the real objects. This created a connection between what the public had possibly read and were now given the opportunity to connect with the object in real life. The concept behind this exhibition was to introduce the public to their local museum and the people who care for the collection, what their roles are and what is their responsibility within the museum. Hopefully this exhibition brought to the attention of the public how well objects within a collection are catalogued and cared for by the museum staff. The exhibition highlighted the 'Great Collections' the museum

holds within its premises and as discussed throughout this chapter all museums have in some way attempted to highlight the strengths of their collections.

Museums Aotearoa took the idea of connecting all the objects in individual collections in New Zealand together by launching their *Distributed National Collection Project* in 2005 (Museums Aotearoa, 2011). Not only can objects from different collections be connected in an online portal but also in a strategy where collection information is shared and so too are the objects. Any institution that holds a collection of public cultural heritage was included in the proposed strategy. Some of the key elements of this strategy were a website, a publication and an exhibition. As mentioned above the website has since been formed and is a relative success, yet it is the other elements of this strategy that have been left on the proverbial cutting room floor. This is a groundbreaking strategy for the GLAM sector of New Zealand, the idea of a *National Distributed Collection* was a fresh and exciting opportunity. Obviously in the physical sense a national collection is not possible but in terms of a collective agreement and understanding for the public and professionals in the industry it offered the opportunity to truly utilise the power of all the stimulating objects New Zealand has within its individual collections.

A big part of the strategy was an exhibition titled *Treasures* which would have featured in the vicinity of two hundred to four hundred objects from collections throughout New Zealand, highlighting to the public what a tiny portion of a national collection looks like and how truly rich in cultural heritage New Zealand is. The exhibition was designed to tour New Zealand in 2011 allowing as many members of the public as possible to see it. An introduction almost to the taonga of their own country, the opportunity to connect with objects they did not even know existed. The scope for this exhibition idea is vast and the prospect for the concept to evolve into something reoccurring and transformative is strong. Accompanying the exhibition would have been a book publication and possibly even a television series, allowing the exhibition to reach a further audience and to allow the public something extra to give context and history to the objects featured. Unfortunately the strategy is yet to be fully formed or embraced by many of the institutions throughout the country that were approached. It appears at this point the goals set for the strategy are not all agreed upon and there is a certain element of possessiveness within the industry, an unwillingness to share and cooperate. What the future holds for this idea is unknown, and it is a somewhat unimaginable task to get everyone in the industry to agree upon a strategy. Nevertheless it is an achievable goal and if it means that the strategy is taken further without the involvement of certain institutions this is certainly better than it

not being addressed at all. In terms of an opportunity specifically addressing collection utilisation, there has not yet been an idea better than the *Distributed National Collection Project*.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided some background context for this dissertation by surveying the initiatives of museums to the central problem considered in the research, namely public access to stored collections. I have showed that international museums have led the way in terms of solutions and strategies that directly deal with stored collection utilisation and access. This is most particularly due to the number of resources that are available to them in the form of funding and specialist staff available. However, whether museums from Great Britain and Europe continue to be leaders in this field will be determined in the not too distant future by changes in funding and legislation which currently support these institutions. New Zealand is certainly in a prime position to take a leading role in terms of forming strong strategies and concepts that address the problems unique to our collection access concerns. To date New Zealand museums and associated organizations that govern the industry have addressed the issues immediately relating to collection access and utilisation with approaches that reflect the level of resources available to them. So far many of the solutions sought have reflected international trends most prominently from England and their leading institutions such as the *Victoria and Albert Museum*.

All of the solutions discussed so far and the evaluation of their success is measured not by what they achieved in this moment of time but what possibilities they open for the future. The accomplishment of exhibitions such as *Secrets* or online search tools such as *Matapihi* is that they begin a dialogue between the GLAM sector and the public, they create an interface for the public to firstly gain understanding about collections but more importantly to begin questioning more about what they are not seeing, what they could be doing, or how they could be more involved. Public consultation discussing this area is the key to finding out whether the solutions which have been so far put in place are successful in opening up the channels of understanding. Or if in fact the public are still in the dark in terms of what stored collections really mean in terms of national significance. There are many important questions that need to be directly addressed to the museum visiting public. Foremost is the question of whether the public are aware of the initiatives which museums have put in place to allow greater access to collections? Have they sought out further information from websites such as *NZMuseums* and do they even care about the volume of objects not currently seen in stored

collections? It is easy enough to assume that there is public need for greater access to collections so much so that two online collection search engines exist, but is this possibly due more to a drive coming internally from the GLAM sector rather than an external pressure from a museum visiting community? In the next chapter therefore, I will present the research gathered on this very question, in the form of public and professional attitudes to stored museum collections, which will hopefully throw more light on this problem.

Chapter Two

Take it to the people:

Public and professional attitudes towards stored museum collections.

Introduction

This dissertation deals with the problem of public access to stored collections in museums. Following on from the last chapter where museum initiatives were canvassed to address the problem, this chapter presents the findings of original research on this topic which tells us more about what visitors and professionals think about museum collections. It is a well-known fact that on average a very small percent of a museum's collection is on view at any one time. This is due to varying factors, for example the percentage of exhibition space versus the number of objects in a collection. As a result there is a large volume of objects in storage facilities throughout the world that are not being seen. As *The Museums Association of Great Britain* states 'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment' (Museums Association, 2010) Each of these objects not being seen is one less story being told, one less fact being learnt and one less chance for an exchange of knowledge. Therefore it can be said that the potential of these collections is not being met. The use of and accessibility to stored collections is at the centre of a debate gathering momentum throughout the GLAM sector worldwide.

As shown in the previous chapter many institutions in the GLAM sector have begun seeking solutions to the problem of making collections more accessible and better utilised. It seems however that the question as to what is driving the need for collections to become more accessible has not been asked. The current body of thought is that *the public are* in need of new ways to access stored museum collections and that there needs to be better justification for having large volumes of objects in storage. There are certainly discussions taking place amongst museum professionals about this topic and different forms of media have reported briefly on those opinions. There is also lively debate about the topic in museum journals and other museum based publications. Certainly some of these points of view published do not represent all the opinions in the sector towards collection access and

utilisation. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the debate is industry centred and that outside opinion most notably from the public is not being sought in direct relation to this topic.

To date the great majority of visitor research that engages public opinion has been based around the individuals experience while at the museum. Very little, or if any, research has been completed focusing on the topic of collection access and utilisation. This is probably due to the fact that many museums, especially in New Zealand, have limited resources to complete research with and when it is undertaken focuses more on their most important issues such as exhibition evaluation. It therefore became apparent to me that there was an urgent need to explore the understanding, ideas and opinions with the museum visiting public. My own quantitative research at *Rotorua Museum*, although limited, offers a small sample of the museum visitors and their opinions towards stored collection care, access and utilisation. This chapter will discuss these findings in terms of the questions asked and the statistical data which was revealed. To offer some balance to the discussion this chapter will also discuss the opinions of *Rotorua Museum* collection staff and the Assistant Director Cherie Meecham. The opinions of Kate Vusoniwailala Director of *Waikato Museum* will also be discussed in relation to this topic to offer a large regional museum perspective. The opinions of both museum staff and museum visitors will be analysed under the headings of three key themes: collection care, collection access and collection utilisation.

Collection care

Collection care is the very basis of a museum's existence, and museums the world over are entrusted with precious objects because they are regarded as the best place to care for them (Knell 1994). Of course it is not their whole or only purpose but without this vital service whole generations of people would not have known where to deposit their treasures and in turn their histories, stories and experiences. As Knell states 'The key attribute of the object, giving it both intellectually and poetic possibilities, is a relationship to the external world, to an original context. The gathering of an object is an act of gathering a piece of that context' (2007, 9). Moreover in the simple act of preserving and caring for an object, the object and the life it was once a part of is encapsulated ready for interpretation by whoever sees it. So if this is such an essential and vital role for a museum should it be integrated into the information a visitor to a museum takes away with them?

When *Rotorua Museum* collection staff were questioned about whether in fact an explanation of how a museum cares for objects should be made part of a visitor's experience, five of eight staff agreed that it should. The role of *Rotorua Museum* as a storehouse for some of the communities' most important treasures is one they take very seriously. It could be said it is the foundation of their very existence. Is this strong passion and desire to care for and look after these items expressed in the museums' exhibitions? Or is it implicit in the way objects are displayed with care and attention? Museum staff have stated that it should feature in a visitors experience. However when the visiting public were questioned '*During your visit did you gain any understanding of how this museum operates as a guardian and caretaker of objects?*' only fifty-three percent of all the Rotorua residents surveyed said yes they did gain an understanding. So why did only a little over half of Rotorua residents surveyed agree with this question? Is this due to a lack of interest in the topic or lack of information available about the topic? By comparison seventy-seven percent of international visitors stated they did gain an understanding of how the museum cares for their objects. Perhaps international visitors were more aware of the guardianship implied within the exhibitions of the collection whereas Rotorua based visitors were looking for more obvious instances in terms of written explanations. Whichever is the case it highlights a need for Rotorua residents to be better informed of how their museum's collection is cared for, indeed if they are to trust the museum with the vital care of objects pertaining to their past surely they want to know how this is achieved.

Noticeably there is a complication here the staff express a desire for this issue to be explained within the museum experience yet currently it is not clear enough to be understood by all visitors. Possibly the staff feel that this is already explained sufficiently by docents during guided tours, or it is implicit in their exhibits of objects and the care taken. On the other hand there may be recognition amongst staff that this is indeed an area that could be worked upon. It may be understood in the wider community that a museum is a place where objects can go to exist in perpetuity, but if a museum does not offer an explanation of how and where they plan to do this then that community can hardly be expected to trust them with their taonga. This may seem like a callous critique but there is currently no better resource available to the public whereby they may expect an institution to care for objects they hold sacred. It makes the best sense for a museum to try and advertise the fact that they are a suitable store house and openly discuss the ways in which specific items receive specific care.

This slightly sterile business approach to caring for objects might sound out of order with current museological practice surrounding the way objects are acquired. Nevertheless museums are doing

themselves a disservice by playing the role of humble receiver of objects whatever quality or quantity may come their way. If museums were to promote and explain the excellent way in which they care for objects then the quality of objects offered to museum could increase greatly. The value and significance of their collections can only be increased by receiving objects that are unique or special to the area, and it would be a great shame for this kind of taonga to be lost to larger metropolitan museum because the public felt they had better facilities to care for them. It would also certainly benefit the museum to publicise and explain how they look after objects in order to help debunk some of the myths that surround stored collections.

It has been assumed so far that when the visiting public were asked if after their visit they had gained an understanding of how the museum cares for their objects that this pertains to the objects on display as well as in a stored collection. Therefore a further question had to be asked to clarify if in fact the visitors had any knowledge of a stored collection. When participants were asked '*Were you aware after your visit today that this museum holds a collection greater/ bigger than what is currently on display?*' of the fifty-two international visitors surveyed sixty nine percent stated they did not gain any knowledge after their visit of a stored collection. Of the twenty seven percent of international participants that said they were aware of a stored collection they further quantified their answer by saying that they had attended a museum tour, during which a mention of a stored collection was made. A remaining four percent stated they were unsure. As interesting as these figures are it must be weighed up in terms of the importance of international visitors not knowing about a stored collection and how this affects the museum. It could be assumed that a great deal of international visitors to the museum may not visit again in the near future. It is therefore the local community that a museum serves which should have a strong knowledge of their museum's collection. This is reflected in a healthy statistic from Rotorua residents with seventy one percent of them knowing the museum had a stored collection. Twenty five percent were not aware of one and four percent were unsure.

It has to be said that by simply knowing about a stored collection does not necessarily indicate the amount of interest in the collection or whether those surveyed have thought any deeper about what it means to have a stored collection. It could be surmised from this data that there is clearly an opening for greater publicity about the existence of a stored collection most prominently in the museums literature or advertising for the museum itself. Traditionally museums have not made it part of their objectives to educate the public about their stored collections, yet before a museum can gauge

whether it is a worthwhile exercise the attitudes of the visiting public towards the collection should be surveyed.

Collection access

Access to stored collections is a topic of discussion around many boardroom tables in museums throughout the world. Not only is the discussion raging about how to best open up stored collections but also why this is necessary. Financially speaking many museums, which are viewed as businesses, are being asked by their governing bodies to explain why it is financially viable to continue to collect more objects when many in their current care are not used, seen or researched. It is a dilemma for museums to explain what the value of such burgeoning collections is if the percentage that is being accessed is so insubstantial. As Keene states:

The word *value* conjures up a number of feel-good aspects, a concept rather than a definition. In earlier days it was considered self-evident that museum collections were valuable and useful... Now, the need to justify them is more common (2005, 159).

As a consequence of this pressure, museums are seeking ways of proving their collections 'value' by employing an increasing number of strategies to demonstrate that the stored collections can be opened up to the public. Furthermore they are proving their worth by increasing public access on many levels. This is firstly being achieved by offering the public an increasing role in contributing their opinions and suggestions towards how a collection can be best accessed.

In the research conducted for this dissertation, a question was designed to evaluate whether visitors felt connected to a museum's collection in terms of whether they felt part of its existence was there to serve them (see appendix for questions). Once again the question was written so that the answer is not specifically related to *Rotorua Museum*, for international visitors it will no doubt relate to their local museum and for Rotorua residents it would be easiest to assume their response is in relation to *Rotorua Museum*. As a collective result eighty-three percent of all those surveyed considered a museum's collection as a resource. Whether it is a resource for research, personal interest or educational reasons we cannot ascertain. But what is important to note is the essential connection made that a stored collection is open for use and that they feel it is a public asset.

If the statistical data is broken down geographically only eleven percent of Rotorua residents felt that the collection was not a public resource. This is an encouraging sign as this group of visitors are those who are most likely to access the collection in some form or another. Perhaps we could assume that there is a sense of ownership within a local community in relation to their museum's stored collection

and that even if they might not intend to make use of it they feel it is accessible because it represents the culture and place they live within. ‘Everywhere, there are people who feel that objects and collections are important in maintaining cultural identity, writes Keene, ‘and in helping people to be aware of their history and roots’ (2005, 9). This could not be more true for Rotorua Museum’s collection, which speaks strongly of the city and local cultures from which it was collected.

International visitors echoed the same sentiment towards the accessibility of their collection with eighty-eight percent agreeing a collection is a public resource. The three statistics discussed above all echo a worldwide trend of museums encouraging their local communities to feel they are a part of their local museum and the resources that are attributed with it. Resources, such as collections, that have been over long periods of time collected from the communities with which they best represent. As Keene states ‘Any museum can preserve objects and display them, but it has been argued that only museums embedded in local culture can preserve knowledge about them’ (2005, 40).

It is in the best interest of all museums to better understand the community they represent and if the public feel that a museum and its collection is equally their resource to use as say a book in the library, then museums will benefit by becoming considered part of a communities everyday framework. Indeed some of a community’s willingness to access a collection and its attributing resources comes from a museums transparency surrounding the details of their collection and whether users of the museums feel a museum is welcoming of the interest. Therefore the question has to be asked does the public feel that museums have an “open book” policy or are they perceived as being tight lipped and reticent with information.

When *Rotorua Museum* staff were asked if they felt that the public should have a greater input into the way in which museums use their collections, the group was divided in their opinions. Half of the eight staff agreed that yes the public should have a greater role, while three said no their current input was sufficient (one staff member stated they could not answer the question). Does this indicate that museum staff are willing to gain input from the public in relation to the collection because they may offer fresh new information or perspectives on how best to access the collection? Or are staff a little hesitant to have an overload of opinions and suggestions that would only be added to the large amount of guidelines they already have to work within? Also it is hard to quantify what the quality of feedback would be if museums really opened up the channels of communication to an entire community. In relation to the question asked of museums management if they thought the public

should have greater input into how museums manage their collections, Cherie Meecham assistant director of *Rotorua Museum* felt this could become a complex process. She commented:

In the past we have done a lot of focus groups around various topics, and what we have found is that the range is so huge that it is really hard to pull out specific advice, and it wasn't that helpful in many instances, it was just so broad. So where do you go, do you go with that group over there's opinions or another group of ideas? There was no kind of middle of the road available (Meecham, 2011).

These points highlight the issue of quality over quantity and although it is important for a community to feel they can share their opinion about the museum, it is also important to make sure it is guided through the right channels, so that the museum concerned is left with data they can constructively use. Understanding how a museum is perceived within the public domain is one issue that is vital to investigate. Indeed it could be said that the way a public feels towards their local museum in terms of how information is supplied in relation to the collection could be the difference between the public having a positive or negative approach towards the museum. In the case of this research, only twenty-six percent of all those surveyed felt that museums were still too protective of their collections and were not welcoming of interest from the public. It is interesting to note that Rotorua residents were the highest percentage within the three groups a figure of thirty-two percent to feel that museums were closed and not forth coming.

As stated earlier how the Rotorua public, as a group, feel, about their local museum is more likely to affect how the collection is accessed and how effective any collection access strategies put in place will be. The statistics explained that sixty-four percent of participants from the Rotorua region did not agree museums were too protective and introverted. This was not an overwhelmingly large number but a clear indication that there is room for improvement. There will always be those in the public domain that feel a museum exists as in its 19th century origins as a mausoleum of archaic histories not to be questioned and existing in an elitist realm. As Spalding puts it:

Though the caricature of a museum – as a place where old things go to gather dust – still holds sway to some degree in popular imagination, many museums have, in the last few decades, changed out of all recognition (2002, 51)'.

Although *Rotorua Museum* may be housed in a historic building that has reached its centenary, this should not deter people from feeling that the museum is a place for discussion and questions. As we saw in chapter one, museums around the world are attempting to break down this antiquated image and encourage an ongoing conversation to begin a dialogue between institution and visitors where

questions are asked and answered. Overall it could be concluded from this research that the public did feel that museums were open to their thoughts, and that staff of the museum were ready to hear them. The channels of communication are already open for Rotorua residents to provide feedback on issues concerning the museum and its collection whether by contacting staff or filling in feedback surveys. Nevertheless continuing efforts need to go into opening the channels of communication so that any remaining old fashioned ideas lingering in the minds of visitors can be left behind for good.

If museums were to open up channels of communication and encourage a greater flow of information to begin with this would equally have to correspond to the way a collection's access is promoted. It would seem unfair to ask the public their opinion about the collection but to then not actively encourage them to access the collection. When *Rotorua Museum* staff were surveyed on this issue six of eight staff felt that the museum currently encourages people, as much as possible, to access the collection in whatever capacity they desire. Clearly the majority of collection staff feels that the current effort made by the museum is sufficient in advertising how the public can access a stored collection. When Rotorua residents were questioned if they would be interested in visiting the stored collection, not taking into consideration some may have already visited, eighty-six percent said yes they would like to. This is an encouraging figure and speaks of the potential for a greater volume of people who would appreciate the chance to see the stored collection. Conversely what percentage of people would actually take the time to do so is unclear as noting an interest is easy enough.

However *Rotorua Museum* as shown in the previous chapter currently offers back of house tours to groups that ask or show interest. The possibility of such a service is not advertised in the local media nor is it directly mentioned on their website. It must be assumed that the reasons for not actively advertising back of house tours is due to a lack of resources to cope with a possible demand that may eventuate. It requires a great deal of staff time to facilitate a group tour and currently *Rotorua Museum* has only a small collection based team. If *Rotorua Museum* were to fully embrace the possibility of increasing collection tours to accommodate visitor interest it would require greater enquiry into the viability of such an activity as will be discussed further in chapter three.

This issue is of course a much more complex matter than simply opening the doors of the collection and letting people in, as there are resources needed, extra staff required, and environmental issues to consider. The research findings highlight the fact that the interest from the public *is* there and that if given the opportunity they may really embrace the chance to look at the wonder that is a stored

collection. However it was also pointed out in chapter one that *Waikato Museum* attempted to advertise stored collection tours with little result or further interest. Kate Vusoniwailala director of *Waikato Museum* gave a possible explanation for this in an interview:

People go to the museum, they want to have an experience, they want to see something of interest, they want to see a particular exhibition that is being advertised and a tour though collection stores do not give that context. The difference with exhibitions is that they are interpreted, there is a narrative, where as in a collection store tour it is very object focused, and people are not necessarily interested in collections per say. They understand museums have collections and that they care for them, but when they visit they are more focused on the experience (Vusoniwailala 2010).

As Vusoniwailala makes plain, there are complicated issues with people actually understanding what they are seeing in back of house tours—it is not simply a case of showing them the inner workings without any interpretation and context. One other way of reaching a larger audience of people in terms of making a stored collection accessible is by digitising a collection. By making a stored collection available online museums are hoping that a greater volume of people can access and view objects which are in storage, although the evidence about the success of democratising museum collections through websites is inconclusive (Snelling 2005). There are many benefits to having a stored collection digitised; objects which are fragile, incomplete, or damaged can be explored without their structural integrity being compromised. Objects that are large or difficult to display can also be viewed by the public without any problems which may occur if the public were to visit the item in storage. However it must be said that viewing an object online could never replace the experience of seeing an object in person. As Susan Pearce eloquently states ‘Objects can have about them a glow of significance, sending sparks of their own into the imagination of the beholder which ... like all magic, objects can bring about a transformation’ (1995, 172). Indeed the very presence of an object can have a lingering affect on those who see it, which is why having a digitised collection on offer to visitors is a helpful resource. Although a visitor may have a memorable experience viewing an object in the museum the online resource can act as a place to go for extra information. Thus enhancing the total experience of the visitor and possibly leading to investigating more of the collection within their own fields of interest. A digital collection is not just useful purely for its aesthetic qualities but also for its possibility to become a resource for researchers and to let the public know about the type of collections a museum has in its possession.

Rotorua Museum is currently digitising parts of their collection for access on their website. When museum staff were asked if they felt that by digitising their collection it would reach a wider

audience all eight participants agreed that yes this will be the outcome. Cherie Meecham agrees that by putting their collection online they hope to reach a great volume of people. She argued that:

It means people do not have to actually come here physically if they want to access the collection, for instance our photographic collection, if people want a photograph of a great aunt or something and they just do it online, so they can live anywhere in New Zealand and access the collection. Our aim is to keep bumping up numbers, to bulk up the site, we only have a bare minimum on there at the moment, we have a new registrar and part of her role is to get pumping through the backlog. Then it's up there for people to see and to do research on. And it is definitely the way to go, so many people e-mail asking what have you got in the way of 'whatever' and we can search on our database and send them a PDF but that takes staff time, so if they can search through themselves through the website then that is a real bonus (Meecham 2011).

However, this overwhelming confidence in the potential of an online collection is somewhat undermined by the number of visitors who said they would access a collection online. Of all visitors surveyed only fifty-four percent said they would be inclined to look at a collection online. This is not an overwhelming number so it serves the statistic best to break down which age groups said they would access the site. Within the category of Rotorua residents, children aged between seven and fifteen were most likely to access an online collection. From the international and New Zealand residents category adults in the forty-five to sixty-five age groups were most likely to use an online collection.

Even more surprising was the number of visitors who had accessed the museums website—only two percent. This was one statistic that proved to be the most interesting of all the questions asked of the public. Overwhelmingly out of all ninety-five people surveyed only two had looked at the museum website before their visit. The two visitors who had accessed the website were both international tourists and were aged between thirty-five and sixty-five. The comment that many visitors followed up their answer with was that they were not aware the museum even had a website. Does this then mean that visitors are getting their information on exhibitions and collections from other sources such as brochures or other print media?

So what does this statistic mean for the future access of an online collection? It has to be said this is not a positive outlook if this statistic is anything to go by; however it is unknown whether many would be prompted to visit the website after their visit to the museum. Overall those surveyed may not have felt that looking at the website was vital before visiting the museum however once they have

visited did they want to find out more about the collection and how *Rotorua Museum* cared for these objects or was enough information gained from their visit?

The online collection is still only in very early stages and the true scope for the project may take several years to be realised. The success of having a collection online can however not be simply measured by how many objects are available on the web but by how they are displayed and the kinds of information available about each object, as already discussed in chapter one. In addition this is the right direction for increasing the number of people who can view objects in a museum stored collection; however there are still more ways in which a stored collection can be utilised beyond allowing access.

Collection utilisation

At the very foundation of all museums stored collections the question remains: why keep objects if they remain in storage and are never seen by the public? From a theoretical and museological standpoint that is a somewhat complicated question to answer. A collection has many more purposes than to simply be seen. As Keene writes ‘Museum collections are not gathered, preserved or researched exclusively or even primarily, for exhibition, although this is one of their more potent and public manifestations’ (2005, 35).

This question is a cornerstone for the premise of this project. Are the public of the opinion that collections are being ‘wasted away’ in storage facilities or is their presence in storage as objects for perpetuity sufficient? When the visiting public were polled on this question the results were not, as to be suspected, clear cut. It is most interesting to view these results as one overall figure as the statistics were very similar for each group of respondents. Overall fifty-four percent of all those surveyed agreed that having less than five percent of a collection on display meant that the remainder was being under-utilised, thirty-four percent felt that it was not being wasted and twelve percent were unsure how to answer. Rotorua residents had the highest percentage of participants agreeing with the question at seventy one percent. Many respondents quantified their answer with reasons such as: it depended on the rate of rotation of objects or what the size of the collection was. This highlights some of the issues that arise from conducting a yes/no answer survey, as there is little room for nuances of thought. However the statistic at a basic level reveals the general opinion that museum stored collections are not being used to the best of their potential.

When *Rotorua Museum* staff were asked if their collection was being utilised in the best possible way only one staff member agreed that it was. This is a distressing result and speaks volumes about a lack of commitment to the possible opportunities to utilise stored museum collections. This may well be out of the hands of the staff and be more simply a result of factors such as financial restraints or other external forces. Furthermore deciding how to best utilise a collection is no easy task and choosing which aspects of a vast collection to focus your efforts upon is extremely difficult. So is a museum's reluctance to fully embrace the possibility of utilising even parts of their collection bound by an issue with limited resources such as space to even display more of their collection?

The restrictions of opening up a stored collection have already been discussed in the previous chapter. Traditionally the only chance an object would have to be seen is to be placed in an exhibition within the museum. Conversely what if a museum were to actively challenge the idea of where objects can and cannot be displayed. *Rotorua Museum* staff were questioned as to whether they thought it was beneficial for museums to investigate the possibility of exhibitions outside of the museum in spaces such as libraries, schools or other public places? Out of all staff surveyed only two of the eight thought that this could be a good idea. Perhaps their reluctance was bound up in larger museum based issues such as insurance, security and environmental control. When Cherie Meecham was asked about what *Rotorua Museum* thought about the idea of exhibitions outside of the museum, she confirmed that this already part of their practice but is connected with some difficult conditions:

It often comes down to best practice and environmental controls, and most schools and other public buildings don't have 24 hour environmental control. We have some of our works at the council buildings and their air conditioning goes off at 4.30 and comes on again at 8 am so there is a huge fluctuation in the environment during that time, so what we have to put there has to be really stable, like ceramics. So it is possible and where it is possible we do try to do that, security is another issue when it's not in your own building insurance becomes a big issue. So again great to be able to try and achieve this but it is complicated. For instance our kaumatua are very keen to see some of the taonga go out to marae in the local area but the only issue we have with that is that many objects have been under twenty four hour environmental control for so long, that once they come out of storage they can begin to just disintegrate, so there is some weighing up to do within that idea (Meecham, 2011)

Kate Vusoniwailala expressed a very similar approach towards facilitating exhibitions outside of a museum space. In an interview she put it this way:

We are very open ... we are committed towards having exhibitions, as we have in the past, outside the museum in different areas of the Waikato, in all sorts of different places, and we make sure that the environment is capable of keeping objects safe, so to speak. We are very open to exploring ways where the collection, we call it outreach, goes outside the museum for a special exhibition or programme. It's a constant balance between the museums conservation

considerations, a balance between the Kaitiaki role in that sense. And something I believe very strongly, which is the spirit of the object, when you wrap something up so tightly that it is inaccessible to your community the relationship breaks down. The risk is that it loses some of its meaning, so the opportunity to put it out in an exhibition, in one of the outreach programmes, whatever way you can, is about the objects that tell the story and whose story it is (Vusoniwailala, 2010).

These views of museum professionals make it clear that the balance between being a Kaitiaki or guardian of treasures and the need to display objects makes the solution of how museums can best utilise a stored collection quite complex. It must be said that before a museum can begin to even entertain the idea of how to best utilise their collection some serious questions must be asked about what resources are available. Many regional museums in New Zealand are underfunded and do indeed need a greater injection of resources into all areas relating to their collections. How can small to medium sized museums think beyond the most pressing needs of their collection within the limited budget on offer? They can certainly be forgiven for giving little priority to making their collections accessible when the basics needs of caring for and displaying the collection take precedence. It is interesting to note that *Rotorua Museum* staff for the most part feel that their institution currently receives enough funding to fully care for and utilise their collection. Six of the eight staff agreed that yes their funding is fully adequate. Of course no museum would ever turn down extra funding but the above results somewhat contradict the topics discussed above. It was previously noted that only one staff member felt the collection was being utilised to its full extent, and as suggested this could be in relation to a lack of funding. Yet the question discussed above about funding hints at the fact that this is not the case. So what is holding *Rotorua Museum* back from utilising its collection? Could we assume it is the collection itself?

This may seem like a strange concept to some that the very nature of a collection holds it back from being fully utilised. A collection is an inherited entity, or as David Ross puts it 'The collection as a whole reflects the multigenerational building effort' (2004, 98). Often a collection can hold objects that were collected before the time of collection strategies and policies. They might no longer fit in with the idea of what the museum wants to convey and as a result can sit in museum collections as a sort of 'white elephant'. Indeed if a museum's collection is incoherent and made up of objects that are no longer relevant then how you can begin to utilise it? It makes best sense for museums to really evaluate on a fairly constant basis how objects fit in with their current collection plan and how they fit in with the process of utilising a collection. Collection rationalisation leading to deaccessioning

items is a contentious, complicated and often drawn out process but it can be a procedure that benefits both those who give and those who receive. As Hein argues:

An item withdrawn from one collection and introduced to a second collection will thereby assume new meaning and will at once alter the signification of both the collection that is diminished by the items absence and the one augmented by its presence (2000, 56).

This is a controversial topic, and many collection managers and registrars find it difficult to face the prospect of getting rid of objects from collections. When *Rotorua Museum* staff were asked if they thought objects should be constantly reviewed in terms of their relativity to the collection, in light of the fact that another institution may make use of them, all but one staff member agreed. This is an encouraging result and possibly means that the *Rotorua Museum* collection is in fact in a good position to be utilised because it is streamlined and most objects are relevant to their collecting objectives and policy. Kate Vusoniwailala was of the same opinion, stating in her interview that currently *Waikato Museum* have a very practical approach in place for making sure their collection is structured in the best possible way so it can be utilised accordingly. As she put it:

In the next 12 months we hope to proactively address the issue of ‘deaccessioning’ of some of the objects in the collection where there is not a lot of relevance regarding provenance, where there is duplicates, for various reasons.... It’s about moving away from the old hoarding philosophy, but it is important to still take into consideration the future relevance of objects (Vusoniwailala, 2010)

Kate Vusoniwailala also discussed the importance of being strategic in what the museum is collecting in the first place so that a situation should not arise where a museum has a collection with many objects which are irrelevant and need reviewing. She explained her views as follows:

You need to be sure you’re being very strategic in what you are acquiring. You need to ensure that it is pertinent of place, pertinent of community and if you’re strategic about it and all of your collections are pertinent then you never really should end up with major issues around storage, and because those objects are pertinent to people, place and story there should always be an opportunity to bring these objects out into the public realm. (Vusoniwailala, 2010)

This raises an excellent point. If museums have a strategic collecting plan, there should not be a need in the future for action to be taken in terms of deaccessioning items that are no longer relevant to a collection (Gardiner and Merritt 2004). But there is still reluctance by many museum professionals to accept that deaccessioning is possibly one solution towards making a collection more accessible and better utilised. As mentioned earlier, possibly it is the opinions of the staff themselves that has the greatest affect upon how a collection can be best utilised.

One hundred percent of *Rotorua Museum* staff agreed that the opinions and attitudes of staff members influenced how the collection is accessed. All eight collection staff members felt that, yes their opinions influenced how the collection is utilised. This is without doubt an honest acknowledgement of the amount of power a museum staff member has over a collection. If this is in fact the case then the evidence suggests it is at the staff level that change has to come about in collections utilisation. Staff of all museums in New Zealand need to strongly evaluate what their opinion is about why a collection should or should not be utilised and weigh up what this means for the future of the museums stored collections.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to discuss the findings of, firstly, visitor research at *Rotorua Museum*, and secondly, the opinions of *Rotorua Museum* collection staff, and finally the opinions of Cherie Meecham assistant director of *Rotorua Museum*, as well as Director of *Waikato Museum* Kate Vusoniwailala. All of these opinions were discussed under three key headings, which reflect the three main issues that arose from the various responses of participants. The results of the research make intriguing and fascinating reading. Many of the final statistics were unexpected and revealed some interesting dilemmas and issues that will be further discussed in chapter three. The data collected from *Rotorua Museum* may only be indicative of the unique situation this museum is placed within, and was only a small representative sample; however the results provide insights which many regional museums in New Zealand will be able to relate to. The most important aspect of gathering these opinions is that it begins the dialogue between the public and important issues facing museums. This research has also possibly brought to the attention of some members of the public topics they had previously not thought about in relation to the museums they visit. Most prominently this research and the outcomes discussed in this chapter truly highlight the potential for further research and gaining a more representative sample that museums can use to help solve issues around stored collection access, care and utilisation. The opinions of *Rotorua Museum* collection staff are also only a small sample, likewise they offer important insights into the inner workings of the professionals who care for stored collections and ultimately have some affect on how the collection is accessed and utilised. Finally the opinions of Kate Vusoniwailala and Cherie Meecham offer a perspective that represents two unique and different regional museums, both sharing similar approaches and concerns. Overall what these opinions and statistics have uncovered are the complexities surrounding collection access and utilisation, how these affect the way museums implement strategies to address collection

access and utilisation will be further discussed in detail in chapter three. Now that the results of the research conducted for this dissertation have been presented and analysed, the next chapter discusses what the meaning and significance of these results hold for the future development of museum collection storage in terms of public access and ownership.

Chapter Three

Complexities and solutions: The future of stored collections.

Introduction

The research completed with the museum visiting public and with museum professionals, as shown in chapter two, brought to light some of the complexities faced when trying to address collection care, access and utilisation. Many of these issues came through in the opinions of staff members as they were the most in tune with the specific issues the sector is facing. The public however also brought to attention some of the missing links in terms of understanding the competencies and failings of the museum in certain areas, and understanding how they felt about a topic for which their opinion is not often sought. It is vital to address these complexities so that when discussing possible solutions for collection access and utilisation they do not appear idealistic and are instead grounded in the realities of the situation in particular museum practice. This chapter will begin by analysing the complexities that arose out of the research and how they relate to museums in New Zealand. In the ensuing discussion these complexities will be examined in terms of how museums can specifically address solutions to make stored collections more accessible and better utilised. Finally, consideration is given to all these points of view, the thesis then turns to query how New Zealand museums could proceed in such a way that meets our unique needs. Taking the lead from international examples, what are some of the strategies that can be adopted that recognise we are a distinctive country with unique stored collections? The solutions canvassed at the end of this chapter will be based upon personal observations of the GLAM sector in New Zealand throughout a period of the last five years

Themes: The complexities of museum practice

The first theme which came to light from the research with museum staff was the impact of professional opinion on collection access and utilisation. As Keene states ‘The professional staff of museums traditionally act as gatekeepers to the collection and of the information about it. Attitudes are slow to change. The idea is often resisted that stored collections should become more widely and openly available, whether physically or electronically’ (2005, 22). This statement is certainly true in the case of the findings from this research. Naturally, professional museum staff are quite protective of the collections which they passionately care about and care for with dedication. This is a vitally

important quality to have in order to make sure that a stored collection is being kept in the most professional way possible. The protective approach does however contrast with a need for collections to be more accessible; therefore a complexity is formed by the very nature of museum staff opinion.

A second problem that arose from the survey of opinions of museum staff was the issue of staff time available for addressing collection access and utilisation. Staff pointed out the fact that the majority of their time was spent in relation to the care of a stored collection. Collection care is a matter of prioritisation for many museums in New Zealand and collection access and utilisation are two topics that unfortunately sit at the bottom of the list of importance. This is due mostly to an over worked staff who are often preparing objects for exhibitions as well as dealing with new acquisitions. Unfortunately in most New Zealand museums there are no staff dedicated to collection access who can specifically address issues about collection access by the public. This is not to say that museum staff would possibly *like* to have more time to address those issues. This issue was also raised in conjunction with resources, because the amount of time available was seen as a resource that the museum did not have, nor did they have the monetary resources to fully attempt strategies to make the collections more accessible.

The third theme that became apparent from the museum visitor research was the public understanding of stored collections. It appeared from the research statistics that many of the public were unaware a stored collection was even in existence let alone some of the issues surrounding the use of the collection. This complexity brought to attention the lack of knowledge and possible interest from the public in this topic, with the result that any solutions implemented to make stored collections more accessible may be met with disregard from certain groups in the community. This also highlights the possibility that a certain amount of education about the principles of a stored collection need to be implemented with the public before introducing the ways they hope to better utilise it. This could be said for all small to medium size regional museums in New Zealand whereby knowledge about their stored collections is not openly publicised. It is important to set a foundation of knowledge around the realities of a stored collection, rather than have the public gain their knowledge of stored collections from sensational newspaper reports or segments they see on television.

Finally the last complexity that became obvious through the completed research with both the museum professionals and the museum visiting public was the difference between attitudes towards collection access. All museum professionals questioned agreed that an 'online collection' would

allow a larger audience to access the stored collection, however only half of all visitors surveyed stated they would look at an online collection. There is clearly a problem here—the overwhelming desire of museum staff to popularise the online collection compared to an underwhelming public demand for it. This highlights the fact that although museum professionals may feel they are creating a solution that begins to solve the problem of how to best access a stored collection, yet they have not sought concrete evidence of how many people in the community may actually make use of it. More of the visitors surveyed said they would visit a stored collection rather than access it online; however opening up the stored collections was not a solution the museum staff noted. This highlights the need for greater communication.

Taking all these intricate issues into account how do they affect the kinds of solutions that New Zealand museums can begin to implement to make their stored collections more accessible and better utilised, while still being cared for in an environmentally and professionally sound way? In the following section, I suggest four strategies New Zealand museums could adopt to address stored collection access and utilisation, taking heed of the restrictions already discussed.

National distributed collection

One way in which New Zealand museums can truly begin to think about making their stored collections more accessible and better utilised would be by becoming involved in the *National Distributed Collection Project*. As already discussed in chapter one, *Museums Aotearoa* has attempted to implement this strategy but has met resistance from certain factions inside the GLAM sector. The basic principal of the strategy is to connect the collections of all cultural heritage institutions in New Zealand, creating a collection that exists for the use of all museums, archives, libraries and galleries. In effect all the collections, which are signed on to the strategy, and the information pertaining to the objects, become available for viewing through a single web based portal accessible by professionals from within the industry. This would allow for museum staff in particular, to access object files without having to contact the institution related and therefore taking up unnecessary staff time. The true benefit of the distributed national collection strategy is that it makes it far simpler for individual museums to access each other's collections to discover what they have, in terms of objects, which may for example relate to an exhibition they are creating. Eventually the *National Distributed Collection* could become accessible to all users on the Internet and offer the public an opportunity to browse through collections, which individually tell stories, but speak of a

larger national history. There is also scope for this strategy to become more than just a database but also an opportunity for museums to gather together elements of their collections and produce touring exhibitions which speak of the amazing collective stories which are part of objects scattered all over New Zealand.

There are obviously issues with asking all of the cultural heritage institutions in New Zealand to commit towards a project that requires museum object records to be complete, digitised and possibly capable of transportation, and there are certainly many small museums who would struggle to simply have their collection digitised. But this is not to say that it could be a long term goal which would require special attention. The effort which is required to begin with would surely outweigh the potential gained once most cultural heritage institutions had their stored collections on a national database for all to see. There are too many treasures hiding away in the storage facilities of museums all over New Zealand for this strategy to not be at least reconsidered and for museums and their possibly hesitant staff to look at what they are truly giving up on. As many museum collection staff will admit they are privileged to get to work with and look at some of New Zealand's most significant Taonga, it seems almost selfish to think that those objects, which are not seen, can continue to be invisible in the eyes of the public.

It is almost impossible for a museum of reasonable size to ever have displayed everything that exists within a stored collection, mostly because the collection continues to grow, therefore to expect a museum to fully utilise this collection alone is almost impossible. Whereas when the collection belongs to a national database, where other museums can see what is available, then perhaps more objects will be given the opportunity to come out into the light at another institution and be shared with a larger audience. There has to be a starting point where all cultural heritage institutions can at least agree that the utilisation of their stored collections cannot remain unchanged, and that if it remains the same then criticism and questioning from the public will be well deserved. Furthermore hopefully the strategy can be given enough support from major museums that the possibility of a touring show featuring a small selection of New Zealand's treasures can be again discussed and planned, it would be great shame for this concept to be wiped completely from the agenda.

The leading international example New Zealand museums can draw from has to be *Glasgow Museums Resource Centre* which has centralised the collections of Glasgow cultural institutions onto a single database put also into a single location. What this has achieved for Glasgow is a stored

collection which can be utilised fully and accessed fully. The access to the stored collection has not been limited to the resource centre itself either and objects are free to travel from the *Open Museum* out into the community. This resource centre reaches out to the community as much as they encourage the public to contact them. There is an osmosis effect of information in which the community communicates what they need from their local museums and they respond with a solution, most ingeniously they devised the *Open Museum* and now people all over the city can appreciate objects from the stored collections of Glasgow without even setting foot in a museum.

Utilisation of spaces outside the museum

The most successful aspect of *Glasgow Museums Resource Centre*, is not the centralised stored collection although a success in itself, it is the collection outreach programme. It would have been sufficient for the resource centre to open their doors to the public and to host specialised tours therefore encouraging the public to engage with the stored collection, they choose to take a step further and to venture out into the community with the objects from the stored collection. As mentioned in chapter one, the *Open Museum* reaches out to community groups and to societies of people who may not have the opportunity to visit a museum or the resource centre. This museum has taken a great risk in deciding that the public are capable of being charged with the care and exhibition of objects for a short period of time. The majority of groups who utilise the outreach programme are community groups, children's organization, special care facilities and homes for the elderly. In effect the open museum encourages the use of spaces such as community halls to become temporary homes for exhibitions of objects of all different scales. The *Open Museum* has openly embraced using facilities outside of the cultural institutions that the collections are usually displayed in, and has instead connected people with objects at places they feel most at home, their communities. By allowing the objects to be displayed and handled outside of the pretext of a museum space the public have the opportunity to interact with objects in a totally different way. The objects not only get to be seen more by the public but the histories get to be shared, the life force of that object can continue on in the minds of the beholder and often reconnect with the very places they originated from.

Museums in New Zealand could certainly consider the idea of using spaces outside of the museum to exhibit parts of the collection which are not often seen. In chapter two I pointed out there are complications when displaying objects in premises without environmental controls or adequate security. There are however many facilities which are governed by the same bodies as museums, such

as local councils, that are suitable for short-term displays. Libraries are very similar to museums in that they are secure and environmentally controlled to a certain degree. This sort of facility could provide an excellent chance for museums to delve into their sorted collections, find objects which have few opportunities to be seen, are environmentally stable and exhibit them for a short term. The possibilities for exhibitions in a library are endless: almost any topic can be displayed and linked back to an individual book or collections of books. There is a certain amount of faith that must be placed in the public to accomplish this, in light of the fact that they will need to respect that the objects are outside their usual realm. As the *Open Museum of Glasgow* has proved in its nearly ten years of operation, the respect for the objects comes about when trust is placed in the public to become guardians of their own treasures—not so much treasures that belong to a museum, but rather objects that exist for them. Once the objects are in the care of the community the aura bestowed upon them by their existence in a museum collection is not lost and only enhances the experience for the observer. This kind of strategy can easily be adopted by many museums in New Zealand at least on a small scale and preliminary scale, and the success of such an idea in terms of whether it utilises more of a stored collection would need to be further researched, and most certainly feedback from the public would need to be sought also.

Public opinion

In general there is a considerable amount of visitor research conducted within many New Zealand museums, even in smaller regional museums which have undertaken large visitor surveys. However the topics covered in such research programmes have largely been based around the museum visitor experience front of house in regards to exhibition display, information panels, interactivity and ease of use of facilities. To date very little if any research has been centred on back of house topics and none at all on stored collection access. Public understanding of what it means to have a stored museum collection is rarely sought, except on the occasion of a sensational newspaper article centred on the topic. This is mostly due to the fact that the topic of collection access and utilisation has only really gained momentum in the New Zealand GLAM sector in the last five or so years.

Since the issue has gained wider attention, New Zealand museums have been looking towards international models to guide how they might address the problem. Solutions being sought as discussed in chapter one are supposedly the most suitable for the New Zealand public and are representative of what a museum visiting audience needs. It seems however that New Zealand

museums are taking the lead from international examples rather than carrying out their own research into what is the best solution suited to our unique situation in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example collections available for viewing online are certainly part of the answer to the question of how to make collections more accessible, yet it is the way in which these online collections are being created that is of concern and highlights a lack of public consultation. New Zealand museums have followed a framework of how to create online collections from international examples, yet they have not taken note of the fact that many online collection facilities are having to adapt and change because the public are not using them.

As chapter one made plain, *Brooklyn Museum* had to find new ways to encourage their visitors to access the online collection and they achieved this through making the collection more interactive. It appears that New Zealand museums are not taking heed of this and are instead charging ahead with getting as much of their collections online as possible. Major museums should have consulted the public on how they would like to access an online collection. Many museums measure the number of ‘web page hits’ their online collection receives, and so the popularity for visiting the site becomes the measure of its success. Yet has anyone addressed the issue of what sort of experience online collection users are having? Although large numbers of people may visit an online collection how many actually find the experience interesting and insightful? There seems to be too much focus on quantity and not enough on quality. Having an online collection which contains 40,000 records of objects is helpful to the public in the sense of finding out what exists within a stored collection yet it does not give the public an opportunity to connect on a personal level.

I would argue that it is high time for museums to open the doors of communication, admit that they cannot know everything about objects and their histories and allow the public to contribute towards the knowledge of their stored collections. By encouraging a sharing of information between the public and museums new ways will become clear of how to survey the public about what they are thinking and feeling about issues around stored collections. As discussed in chapter two many museum professionals are reluctant to engage the public in discussions around the topic of stored collections, as they are concerned that quality of information may vary and be of no real use. If the information is sought through the right channels, such as online surveys, or museum visitor research then the information gained can be of real use in terms of evaluating if the solutions being sought for collection access and utilisation are in fact what the public want and need. There is however one issue

which prevails over all of these suggestions and that is the availability of resources, such as staff time and funding as previously mentioned.

Resources

The resources, primarily monetary resources, that have been available for museums has not allowed for much more than the care of the collection. This is due to the lack of funding available for museums to enable additional focus upon making collections accessible and better utilised. From time to time lottery grants and other private benefactors have allowed for greater emphasis to be placed on acquiring better equipment to digitise a collection or for an extra staff member to be hired to help with the backlog of work. It is virtually impossible to suggest that museums in New Zealand need to actively acquire more funding, as this is such a complex issue wound up in governing bodies and councils. It would obviously be ideal for museums to be given a larger volume of funding that not only allows for the care of the collections but also for access and utilisation as well.

However what would be most effective is a collection rationalisation as part of collection development planning but also using other kinds of resources that are not financial. If New Zealand museums were to review what they consider to be a resource, this could enable them to make their stored collections more accessible by drawing on human resources. A resource does not necessarily have to refer to money and funding, it can be about the resources of a community, a group of people, individuals, charitable organizations, and museum professionals from other institutions. Museums in New Zealand need to harness the resources of their communities and local interest groups. Many museums already have large numbers of volunteers working as docents and guides, these types of people who have a strong interest in their local museum could also be further encouraged to help with tasks around collection management. There are a number of people in the community with specialist knowledge and in depth histories that could help build the records of many stored collection objects. Becoming resources focused requires a museum to recognise the key individuals and groups within their local communities who have the most to share in terms of time and expertise.

It would also make sense for museums to identify other institutions which share similar stored collection issues and to share how they have individually handled different problems, a network of problem solving and general discussion. It could be said that *National Service Te Paerangi* performs the role of connecting museum professionals and helping them with specific problems. New Zealand

museums could then take the relationship, once established, further by sharing the outcomes of visitor research, contributing different staff perspectives and generally helping each other keep up to date with museum related issues.

Being resource focused is also about identifying the strengths of a stored collection and identifying objects that are a resource for the community. How these key resources within a collection can be best used to draw in more visitors and create exhibitions that serve a community, is important for museums to evaluate. Viewing a stored collection as a community resource is a very important ideological shift for museums to make, as this will ultimately affect how much help a museum can expect to receive from the public in terms of volunteers and local experts. If a stored collection is promoted to the public as a resource then there will no doubt be an on flow effect with greater participation and interest in its care. Museums need to begin sharing with the public, not only the responsibility of caring for a collection as a resource, but also the responsibility for sharing knowledge about it. A stored collection can begin to take on new meaning if the public feel like they have an influence on how it is used.

Museums and the future of stored collections

In an ideal world there are many possibilities New Zealand museums can attempt to make their collections more accessible and better utilised. Based on the research conducted in this dissertation, and leading museum practice overseas, I have developed some ideas about possible directions suggesting what the future could look like for New Zealand museum stored collections.

Ideally all New Zealand museums should have a digitised collection available through *NZ Museums Online*. The quality of object entries will be rich with as much relevant information as possible, although all of a museums stored collection may not be digitised the most important elements of all collections should at least be available. This then creates a wonderful nationally distributed collection that is available for museum professionals and the public to access, however the level of interactivity available will be significant. *NZ Museums* needs to evolve into a collection access tool that allows users to join a network whereby they can interact with objects from all the different collections. There needs to be opportunities made where users can share their opinions, thoughts and feelings about an object. An opportunity to share stories that relate to that object, to post photos, videos and audio files all adding to the richness of content available about that object. The object listing needs to be the central point in a larger web of sharing information and connecting with people. *Brooklyn Museum*

and their online collection tool needs to be viewed as merely the starting point for online collections to become more interactive. There is such a vast amount of networking and information sharing taking place on the Internet and online collections need to become part of that. Online collection tools also need to absorb the trend of having a public account holders, people with an online profile who want the chance to personalise the way they use a website and to navigate through a web page in new and interesting ways, in line with web 3.0 technologies.

The ability to interact with an online collection should not be limited to only the public, as museum professionals should also be encouraged to get involved with object listings, to post video responses, to answer questions, to share their stories about an object, to share how they care for it, or why it is their favourite thing in the whole museum. Overall there is such a huge opportunity for online collections to connect with people not just on a visual level but on a personal level. An opportunity to feel they are part of a process of sharing knowledge about the objects that exist in a stored collection and to breathe new life into treasures that have in many ways lost their life force and to reform the connections they once had with the lives of real people.

Creating an online community of people who access online collections and interact with them opens many opportunities in itself. By creating a community of online collection users there is a fantastic opportunity to have a captive audience who are willing and able to give feedback about how effectively the online collection tools are operating. Because the users demographic information is stored as part of their online profile, museums throughout New Zealand would have a database of people who are able to take part in visitor research and focus groups. Their opinions on exhibition ideas and concepts can also be sought. As mentioned in chapter one, *Museums Aotearoa* were hoping to launch an exhibition of treasures featured from collections throughout New Zealand. This is a great opportunity to get a community of online collection users to choose their favourite objects that they would like to see feature in a nationally travelling exhibition. Each object could then be connected back to the person who chose it and why it is important to them giving the whole exhibition a community driven aspect. The travelling exhibition could be a concept for museums to adopt and could offer different community groups the opportunity to curate their own displays with objects from the stored collection.

Furthermore these exhibitions could be displayed in public places outside of the museum in community halls, libraries and schools. To date museum professionals have had full control over

what features in exhibitions and it is time that more of the community were included in the process of creating exhibitions. Not only would new relationships be formed with members of the public but also treasures and Taonga that were not previously being accessed or used will be in the light of day for all to see. Only then can museums in New Zealand say they are really trying to make their stored collections accessible and utilised in the best possible way, and in fact may even become a leading international example of how to do it well.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this chapter that the task of making stored collections more accessible and better utilised is incredibly complex and fraught with issues that exist within the museum itself and in the communities which surround them. It must be said that the possibilities and solutions that are available to New Zealand museums to create collections that are accessible and utilised are outstanding. Once the complexities, as outlined in this chapter, are addressed individually by all New Zealand museums, it will become apparent what solutions would work best for each individual museum. There can be no true solutions that are applicable for all museums; each institution is unique with a stored collection that is beset with unique problems. Yet all museums in New Zealand should be able to identify with the solutions discussed in this chapter and can adapt them to their own needs. It would be too easy for many museums to decide that the task of making a collection more accessible was too hard and complicated for them to address. What is most important for all museums in New Zealand is to address the complexities they face in a realistic way and to seek advice from organizations and other institutions in the industry. The opportunities for making collections more accessible and better utilised are growing every year and it is up to New Zealand museums to decide if they want to be part of the evolution.

Conclusion

We are all familiar with the sensational newspaper stories that tend to dwell on museum treasures locked in the basement that no-one sees. This dissertation attempted to go beyond such shallow debates by conducting original research into public and professional understanding of stored collections and access to them. This dissertation began by posing a central research question that asked what are the opinions of the public and museum staff towards collection care, access and utilisation? After a background chapter in which international and New Zealand initiatives in collection access were surveyed, chapter two presented the opinions of the public on this topic which were analysed in the form of data collected through surveys after their visit to a museum. As demonstrated in chapter two the results were often surprising and unpredictable, but on the whole the conclusion was clear cut and spoke strongly of the views and opinions of each group of visitors surveyed.

On the one hand there were often similarities between the views of all those surveyed which pointed to some universally held notions about museums and their stored collections. The museum professionals that were surveyed articulated some very interesting themes in revealing some of the complexities surrounding the research question. The staff were divided on many issues while some topics appeared to be far more clear-cut for them. Finally in chapter three, the analysis of the results led to a discussion about possible future directions for greater public access to, and utilisation of, museum collections.

This dissertation has been specifically focused on *Rotorua Museum* and the visitors who frequent the museum and the staff who care for its collection. However the findings of this research are relevant to all museums in New Zealand. The issue of stored collection access and utilisation has been for the most part an issue the public have had very little opportunity to comment on. Professionals in the museum sector are well aware of issues that surround the discussion about stored collection access and utilisation, and often their opinions have been sought for industry publications, which for the most part are only circulated within the museum profession.

This dissertation has highlighted the gap that exists within museum visitor research in New Zealand, and highlights the need for further and more in-depth research exploring public opinion on collection care, access and utilisation. There is also a need for a broader range of museum professionals'

opinions to be sought, not only for consideration by other museum staff but also to be published for consumption by the public. This dissertation has also brought to light how the spheres of the public and the professional are given very few opportunities to mingle together, and that there is a real sense of two different ‘cultures’ or factions, the museum world and the wider society, which urgently need to be connected. As Spalding argues ‘A museum exists in a community, and a community exists within a museum’ (2002, 109). The findings of this research suggest that these two ‘communities’ often share similar understandings about collections yet never meet somewhere in the middle to discuss the solutions, solutions that would be of immense benefit to museums because of greater public understanding and support, and to society because of the greater social benefit museums can provide.

How has this research made a contribution towards museum studies and museum practice? As the literature review in the introduction made clear, there is a significant paucity of original research on this topic in New Zealand. This dissertation based on original research addresses this problem by providing a small sample of public and professional opinions which are currently shaping the way museums in New Zealand approach collection access and utilisation. As well as adding to the academic literature of museum studies, the dissertation also offers museum professionals some fresh perspectives on the current thinking around collection access and utilisation in two New Zealand regional museums. In the process of interviewing both the museum visiting public and museum professionals, an example has been presented of how discussion can take place with both groups of people at the same time, despite the different perspectives they bring to it.

The debate about how museums in New Zealand can make their stored collections more accessible and better utilised is gaining momentum every year. This research offers models of international museums which have to date been successful in opening up and using stored collections with the public. In turn this research has provided a picture of the New Zealand scene, and guidance on ways in which New Zealand museums can adapt these overseas solutions to meet the unique set of challenges they face when ‘opening up’ and using a stored collection. It is hoped that several elements of the dissertation will be useful to students, scholars and professionals in bringing together theory, policy and practice on this topic: a literature review, a survey of international and New Zealand initiatives, a survey of public and professional opinion, interviews with directors and other museum managers, and a framework suggesting how museums can begin to incorporate public

involvement in collection development, and finally in the last chapter a few thoughts about how things might develop in future in New Zealand museums.

It may be construed that the argument developed in this dissertation could seem idealistic, however I have found the process of undertaking this study has informed me of the practical difficulties involved in such a far from straight forward issue. It has been pointed out that simply accessing and utilising a museum's stored collection is by no means a straightforward or simple process. There are a number of complexities that, as highlighted in chapter three, prevent many museums from truly taking on the challenge.

These problems are surmountable however, if New Zealand museums have the courage to embark on a reassessment of the role and purpose of their status as public institutions holding collections not for themselves but in trust for the whole community. In order to support and guide this opening up of museum collection stores, a great deal of further research needs to be conducted, both academic and museum based research that may follow on from the work completed here to lay out a blueprint for future development.

Although ideas were offered in chapter three about some possible solutions for New Zealand museums including some specific recommendations about how they can begin to address the special circumstances many museums face when trying to make their stored collections more accessible and better utilised, this is only the beginning of a long line of further research into the topic. There firstly needs to be a shift in the focus of museum visitor research from simply being interested in the museum visitors' experience but to also question the visitors overall understanding of what a museum and its stored collection mean to the public.

There is a lot of work to do with the public to find out where their understandings, expectations, interests and criticisms lie in relation to stored collections. This dissertation has only touched on a brief local example of the type of visitor research New Zealand museums could be undertaking. Information such as this needs to be gathered before any moves are made to enhance collection access and utilisation. Furthermore research findings need to be published and disseminated in ways which the general public will be able to access. At the moment there is a yawning gap between the very basic knowledge of museums among the general public and the specialised policies and practices of professionals in the sector—this is not helpful for either and leads to the kind of media

controversies that erupt from time to time. It is not enough for debate about this topic to feature only in museum journals and conference papers. To date the majority of information the public do receive around this subject is delivered in sensational formats with very little context or background information.

Finally this dissertation has suggested that museum practice needs to reassess the focus of their resources such as staff time and expertise, directing them on to more than just the care of the stored collection but onto the much larger issue of what to do with it all? It is too simplistic to merely claim that museum stored collections can be made more accessible if the museum and its staff want it to be, there also has to be a drive present from the external community for this to happen. As I have argued in this dissertation, essentially we need to move beyond the controversy and the gap in understanding on these issues to find common ground between public and professionals.

Based on the research conducted for this study, my conclusion is that there is a common link between the museum visiting public and museum professionals, in the sense that both agree that a stored collection and all its magnificent objects are not currently being utilised in the best possible way. Why keep it if you can't see it? If we all agree that it is not acceptable, if it is not being seen by anyone, anywhere, anytime, then we can work together in opening up museum collections so that they truly do become our common heritage. After all, isn't that what a museum is for?

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Appendices

Research Information Sheet.

Researcher: Gabrielle West age 25 resident of Rotorua. Masters student at Victoria University of Wellington completing a Masters in Museum and Heritage Studies

Contact Details: babs195@hotmail.com

What is the research about? The research is titled '*Why keep it if you can't see it! An investigation into public and professional attitudes towards collection care and access in museums*'. I am trying to gauge an understanding of how the public feel about museum's collections and the way they are currently cared for, accessed and utilised.

What is this research for? This research will form part of my dissertation which is the written component of my masters degree. The research collected will be the basis of my discussion within the dissertation.

What is your part in the research? The following survey contains ten questions which can be answered with simple yes, no or unsure answers. The survey should take no longer than two minutes of your time. At the beginning of the survey some of your details such as age group and nationality will be collected for statistical purposes.

What will happen to the information collected? All of the surveys I am conducting are anonymous so there are no personal details collected. All the surveys will be only viewed by me or my supervisor therefore confidentiality is not an issue. Once the information has been collated and then published in the dissertation all surveys will be destroyed by shredding.

What is the outcome of this research? Once I have completed the dissertation and it has been bound into a book a copy will be placed in the Victoria University of Wellington library. Any other copy will be retained by me personally.

Declaration to participants

Individuals will not be identified in any publication/dissemination of the research findings because all research is anonymous. All information collected during surveys and conversations will only be viewed by the researcher, and her supervisor if requested, and remain strictly confidential.

If you take part in the study you have the right to among other things to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study up to the time of submission.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study, when it is concluded.

Researcher:

Signature:

Date:

Questionnaire for Museum Visitors.

M / F Age group: 7 - 15y, 16 - 25y, 26 - 35y, 36- 45y, 46 – 65y, 66y + Local / NZ resident Other / International visitor

Please answer using YES, NO or UNSURE

1. Were you aware after your visit today that this museum holds a collection greater/ bigger than what is currently on display?
2. A maximum of 5% of a museum's collection is on display at any one time the remaining 95% is in storage. Do you think the remainder of the collection is therefore being underutilized or misused because we cannot see it?
3. If you could visit and view this museums stored collection would you be interested in going?
4. If a museum made viewing its stored collection available through other sources such as the internet would you be interested in finding out more?
5. Do you think of a museum's collection as a resource that can be used and taped into by the public for personal use?
6. Do you think that museums are too protective of their collections and do not encourage the public to ask questions about them?
7. During your visit today was there a particular object that you found interesting and would like to find out more about it?
 - a. If YES would you know where to go for this information?
8. During your visit did you gain any understanding of how this museum operates as a guardian and caretaker of objects?
9. Finally before you came to this museum today had you visited the museums website to find out more about what they offered in terms of their collection and exhibitions?

Questionnaire for Museum Staff.

M / F Age group: 16 - 25y, 26 - 35y, 36- 45y, 46 – 65y, 66y + (Please Circle)

Please answer using YES, NO, UNSURE, or CAN NOT ANSWER

This survey is completely anonymous; secondly it is only a simple questionnaire so ideally spend no longer than 10 minutes answering the questions.

1. Do you feel that a museum collection is a resource that can be tapped into and used by the public?
2. Do you feel that this museum openly encourages, to the best of its ability, people to access the collection in whatever capacity that may be, for example for the purpose of research, creativity or pure interest?
3. A community will often feel some ownership of a local museum, even if they are not regular visitors. Do you think that there should be greater public input into the way in which museums use their collections?
4. Rotorua Museum is faced with a unique situation because part of the building will always be dedicated to the history of the institution. Do you therefore think that this may impede upon how well the collection can be utilized in terms of display space?
5. It is noted that there is only so much exhibition space within a museum and that possibly only 5% or less of a collection is on display at any one time. Do you feel that it would be beneficial for this museum to investigate the possibility of exhibitions outside of the museum in spaces such as the library, in schools, hospitals and other public places?
6. It is inevitable that a collection will grow at a faster rate than the expansion of museum's exhibition space. Do you therefore think that individual objects should be consistently reviewed in terms of their relativity to a collections purpose and mission statement? In light of the fact that it may better utilized by another institution?
7. Is this museum's collection currently being utilized in the best possible way?
8. Digitizing of museum collections has been sought as an answer to opening up stored collections. Do you feel that by digitizing this museum's collection you would reach a larger audience of people?
9. Museums are a repository for a nation's treasures and taonga therefore should an explanation of how a museum cares for these objects to be made part of visitors' experience?
10. An enduring problem for New Zealand museums is fulfilling their mission with limited resources. In your opinion does this museum currently receive adequate resources to care for and utilize the collection?

11. Finally do you feel that the opinions and attitudes of museum staff members have an influence on how the collection is accessed and used?

Museum Management interview questions.

1. What do you feel is the main purpose of a museum collection? Or possibly main purpose(s) plural?
2. Do you feel that a museum collection is a resource that can be tapped into and used by the public?
3. Do you feel that it is the responsibility of museums to openly encourage people to access the collection in whatever capacity that may be, for example for the purpose of research, creativity or pure interest?
4. Digitizing of museum collections has been sought as one answer to opening up stored collections. Do you feel that by digitizing this museum's collection you would reach a larger audience of people?
5. A community will often feel some ownership of a local museum, even if they are not regular visitors. Do you think that there should be greater public input into the way in which museums use their collections?
6. Museums are a repository for a nation's treasures and Taonga therefore should an explanation of how a museum cares for these objects be made part of visitors' experience? In other words should museums become more transparent about what happens behind closed doors?
7. It is noted that there is only so much exhibition space within a museum and that only 5% or less of a collection is on display at any one time. Do you feel that it would be beneficial for this museum and other museums in New Zealand to investigate the possibility of exhibitions outside of the museum in spaces such as the library, in schools, hospitals and other public places?
8. Allowing access to stored collections for the public is a complicated task and requires a great deal of resources and staff time. Therefore should the focus be shifted away from how to make stored collections accessible and instead be put upon creating a larger range of exhibitions which draw objects out of the collection rather than trying to draw people into an environmentally delicate and often confined space?
9. It is inevitable that a collection will grow at a faster rate than the expansion of museum's exhibition space. Do you therefore think that individual objects should be consistently reviewed in terms of their relativity to a collections purpose and mission statement? In light of the fact that it may better utilized by another institution and therefore saving one museum to care for an object which may not be accessed.

10. The question of whether collections should be accessed by the public is a complicated issue and there are many considerations to be made, therefore it is not favoured by many museum practitioners as the best way to make collections accessible. In your opinion how can museums in New Zealand best utilize their collections?
11. Finally do you feel that the opinions and attitudes of museum staff members have a large influence on how the collection is accessed and used?

Research Findings

Results from the Rotorua Museum visitor survey listed by participant's place of residence.

International participants

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7A	8	9
<i>Yes</i>	14	27	41	29	46	10	26	16	40	2
<i>No</i>	36	21	8	21	2	31	26	8	12	50
<i>Unsure</i>	2	4	3	2	4	11	0	2	0	0
Total										
52										

Rotorua District participants

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7A	8	9
<i>Yes</i>	20	16	24	15	23	9	19	17	15	0
<i>No</i>	7	9	3	12	3	18	9	1	10	28
<i>Unsure</i>	1	3	1	1	2	1	0	1	3	0
Total										
28										

New Zealand resident 'other' participants

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7A	8	9
<i>Yes</i>	6	8	8	8	12	4	9	8	12	0
<i>No</i>	9	5	6	7	2	11	5	1	2	15
<i>Unsure</i>	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total										
15										

Total number of participants 95

Research results from the Rotorua Museum visitor survey further explained in terms of place of residence, gender and age group.

Female International Visitors

When the answer was
Yes.

Question		Age group					
		10-	16 -	26 -	36 -	46 -	
		15	25	35	45	65	66+
1		0	0	2	1	5	1
2		0	2	0	1	11	5
3		0	2	3	1	13	6
4		0	1	2	1	7	3
5		0	1	2	2	15	7
6		0	0	0	0	2	4
7		0	1	0	2	9	2
A		0	1	0	1	6	2
8		0	2	1	2	16	5
9		0	0	0	1	0	0

When the answer was
No.

Question		Age Group					
		10-	16 -	26 -	36 -	46 -	
		15	25	35	45	65	66+
1		0	2	1	1	10	6
2		0	0	2	1	4	2
3		0	0	0	1	2	1
4		0	1	0	1	9	4
5		0	0	0	0	1	0
6		0	2	1	2	10	3
7		0	1	3	0	7	5
A		0	0	0	1	3	0
8		0	0	2	0	0	2
9		0	2	3	1	16	7

When the answer was
Unsure.

		<i>Age Group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
	2	0	0	1	0	1	0
	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
	5	0	1	1	0	0	0
	6	0	0	2	0	4	0
	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	A	0	0	0	0	1	0
	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

Male International Visitors

When the answer was Yes.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	2	3	0
	2	0	0	1	1	6	0
	3	0	0	2	1	8	5
	4	0	0	3	1	7	4
	5	0	0	2	3	9	5
	6	0	0	0	1	1	2
	7	0	0	2	1	7	2
	A	0	0	1	1	4	0
	8	0	0	1	2	9	2
	9	0	0	0	0	1	0

When the answer was No.

Question	<i>Age group</i>					
	10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
1	0	0	3	1	7	5
2	0	0	1	2	4	5
3	0	0	1	2	1	0
4	0	0	0	2	3	1
5	0	0	0	0	1	0
6	0	0	1	2	8	2
7	0	0	1	2	4	3
A	0	0	0	0	2	2
8	0	0	2	1	2	3
9	0	0	3	3	10	5

When the answer was
Unsure.

Question	<i>Age group</i>					
	10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2	0	0	1	0	1	0
3	0	0	0	0	2	0
4	0	0	0	0	1	0
5	0	0	1	0	1	0
6	0	0	2	0	2	1
7	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	0	0	1	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0

Female New Zealand residents

When the answer was
Yes.

		Age group					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	0	3	1
	2	0	0	1	0	3	1
	3	0	1	2	0	3	1
	4	0	1	3	0	2	0
	5	0	1	1	0	5	1
	6	0	0	1	0	1	0
	7	0	0	3	0	3	1
	A	0	0	3	0	2	1
	8	0	1	1	0	5	1
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

When the answer was
No.

		Age group					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	0	1	3	0	2	0
	2	0	1	2	0	1	0
	3	0	0	1	0	2	0
	4	0	0	0	0	3	1
	5	0	0	1	0	0	0
	6	0	1	2	0	4	1
	7	0	0	0	0	2	0
	A	0	0	0	0	1	0
	8	0	0	1	0	0	0
	9	0	1	3	0	5	1

When the answer was
Unsure.

Question		Age group					
		10.-	16 -	26 -	36 -	46 -	
		15	25	35	45	65	66+
1		0	0	0	0	0	0
2		0	0	0	0	1	0
3		0	0	0	0	0	0
4		0	0	0	0	0	0
5		0	0	1	0	0	0
6		0	0	0	0	0	0
7		0	1	0	0	0	0
A		0	0	0	0	0	0
8		0	0	1	0	0	0
9		0	0	0	0	0	0

Male New Zealand residents

When the answer was Yes.

Question		Age group					
		10.-	16 -	26 -	36 -	46 -	
		15	25	35	45	65	66+
1		0	0	0	0	1	1
2		0	0	1	0	2	0
3		0	0	0	0	1	0
4		0	0	0	0	2	0
5		0	0	1	0	2	1
6		0	0	0	0	1	1
7		0	0	1	0	1	0
A		0	0	1	0	1	0
8		0	0	0	0	3	1
9		0	0	0	0	0	0

When the answer was No.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10-	16 -	26 -	36 -	46 -	
		15	25	35	45	65	66+
Question	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
	3	0	0	1	0	2	0
	4	0	0	1	0	1	1
	5	0	0	0	0	1	0
	6	0	0	1	0	2	0
	7	0	0	0	0	2	1
	A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	8	0	0	1	0	0	0
	9	0	0	1	0	3	1

When the answer was
Unsure.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10.-	16 -	26 -	36 -	46 -	
		15	25	35	45	65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

Female Rotorua residents

When the answer was
Yes.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	2	2	1	3	4	2
	2	3	2	1	3	4	0
	3	4	2	1	4	5	1
	4	3	1	0	1	2	0
	5	3	2	1	3	5	2
	6	1	1	0	3	2	0
	7	3	1	0	4	5	2
	A	2	1	0	4	4	2
	8	3	0	0	2	5	2
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

When the answer was
No.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	2	0	0	1	2	0
	2	0	0	0	1	2	1
	3	0	0	0	0	1	1
	4	1	1	1	2	4	2
	5	1	0	0	1	0	0
	6	3	1	1	1	4	2
	7	1	1	1	0	1	0
	A	0	0	0	0	1	0
	8	1	2	1	1	1	0
	9	4	2	1	4	6	2

When the answer was
Unsure.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	1	0	0	0	0	1
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
	5	0	0	0	0	1	0
	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	A	1	0	0	0	0	0
	8	0	0	0	1	0	0
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

Male Rotorua residents

When the answer was Yes.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	3	1	0	1	1	0
	2	1	1	0	0	1	0
	3	5	0	0	1	1	0
	4	5	1	0	2	0	0
	5	5	0	0	2	0	0
	6	1	0	0	0	1	0
	7	2	1	0	1	0	0
	A	2	1	0	1	0	0
	8	2	0	0	1	0	0
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

When the answer was No.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
	2	3	0	0	2	0	0
	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0	1	0
	5	0	0	0	0	1	0
	6	3	1	0	2	0	0
	7	3	0	0	1	1	0
	A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	8	1	1	0	1	1	0
	9	5	1	0	2	1	0

When the answer was
Unsure.

		<i>Age group</i>					
		10- 15	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	1	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5	0	1	0	0	0	0
	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	8	2	0	0	0	0	0
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

Rotorua Museum Staff

When the answer was
Yes.

		<i>Age group</i>			
		26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	1	2	3	1
	2	1	2	2	1
	3	0	1	2	1
	4	0	0	0	0
	5	1	0	1	0
	6	2	1	3	1
	7	0	0	0	1
	8	2	2	3	1
	9	1	1	2	1
	10	2	1	2	1
	11	2	2	3	1

When the answer was
No.

		<i>Age group</i>			
		26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 65	66+
Question	1	1	0	0	0
	2	1	0	0	0
	3	2	1	0	0
	4	1	2	3	1
	5	1	2	0	1
	6	0	1	0	0
	7	1	2	0	0
	8	0	0	0	0
	9	1	0	0	0
	10	0	1	0	0

When the answer was
Unsure.

		<i>Age group</i>			
		26-	36 -	46 -	
		35	45	65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	1	0
	3	0	0	0	0
	4	1	0	0	0
	5	0	0	1	0
	6	0	0	0	0
	7	0	0	2	0
	8	0	0	0	0
	9	0	1	0	0
	10	0	0	0	0
	11	0	0	0	0

When the answer was
Cannot Comment.

		<i>Age group</i>			
		26 -	36 -	46 -	
		35	45	65	66+
Question	1	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	1	0
	4	0	0	0	0
	5	0	0	1	0
	6	0	0	0	0
	7	1	0	1	0
	8	0	0	0	0
	9	0	0	1	0
	10	0	0	1	0
	11	0	0	0	0