Towards a National Collection
Opening UK Heritage to the World
Impact

Towards a National Collection aims to have a transformative impact on:

• **Digital search** and cataloguing tools, technologies and methodologies, and associated issues

• **Research capability**: through enhanced researcher access and new cross-collection search tools, researchers will be able to exploit the potential of the nation’s research assets in innovative ways, addressing radically new research questions

• **Public access and public engagement with heritage**: the programme will generate research-driven public-facing outputs, including major new exhibitions and immersive installations; extend public access beyond collections’ physical location, nationally and internationally; and facilitate wider and better-informed public engagement
Objectives

• to undertake research that begins to dissolve barriers between different collections
• to open up collections to new cross-disciplinary and cross-collection lines of research
• to extend researcher and public access beyond the physical boundaries of their location
• to benefit a diverse range of audiences
• to be active and of benefit across the UK
• to provide clear evidence and exemplars that support enhanced funding going forward
Scope

- £18.9m Strategic Priorities Funding over five years (February 2020 – January 2025)
- Delivered through UK Research and Innovation/Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Structured around two phases of grant funding - £1.6m for Foundation Projects and £15m for Discovery Projects
- Led and coordinated by a programme directorate based at Historic Environment Scotland in Edinburgh
Outcomes

• A strong collaborative research community, bringing together practitioners from across the cultural heritage sector with academic researchers, including those at the forefront of digital humanities

• A step change in the capacity, capability and ambition of cultural heritage organisations to connect their collections

• A new position of strength, knowledge and confidence, allowing senior leaders and funders to make informed decisions on future digital investment
Timetable

• Director and eight Foundation Projects started on 1 February 2020
• Pre-call notice issued for Discovery Projects, with open meetings on 4 March (London) and 11 March (Edinburgh)
• Full call specification for Discovery Projects to be launched in April 2020
• Foundation Projects end between August 2021 and January 2022
• Discovery Projects to start by September 2021 and end by November 2024
Foundation Projects

• Eight projects of 18-24 months, each c£200K
• All projects led by an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) in partnership with a Higher Education Institution (HEI), with further IRO and other partners
• All employing a digital humanities post-doctoral researcher
• Projects are reviewing current position, testing methodologies through case studies, presenting recommendations for future practice
Foundation Projects

The National Gallery: *Practical applications of IIIF* - aims to understand current use of the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) and explore what new tools and/or services are needed. Co-Investigators: University of Edinburgh, British Library, National Portrait Gallery

The National Archives: *Deep Discoveries* - aims to design a prototype app enabling cross-collection image linking by harnessing the ability of computer vision and deep learning methods to identify and recognise specific patterns without the need for preliminary integrated descriptive metadata. Co-Investigators: University of Surrey, V&A, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Foundation Projects

**British Library: Locating a national collection** - aims to help cultural heritage organisations to use geospatial data to connect diverse collections and engage research and public audiences in new ways. Co-Investigators: University of Exeter, National Trust, Historic Royal Palaces

**British Library: Persistent Identifiers** - aims to develop a framework and recommendations on the approach to Persistent Identifiers for local, regional and national institutions across the UK heritage sector. Co-Investigators: University of Glasgow, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, The National Gallery

**Science Museum Group: Heritage Connector** - aims to create a "Heritage Connection Engine" that will analyse catalogues, published material and knowledge graphs, and build links at massive scale. Co-Investigator: University of London
Foundation Projects

**Tate: Provisional Semantics** - aims to develop ethical, equitable and transparent readings to support a more diverse public to engage with the digitised national collection. Co-Investigator: University of the Arts London, Imperial War Museum, National Trust


**V&A: Born Digital** - aims to ensure born-digital culture remains an integral and research-led part of the national collections of cultural heritage. Co-Investigators: Birkbeck College, British Film Institute
Discovery Projects

• £15m (80% of FEC) for up to five large scale interdisciplinary research projects
• Core collaboration between one or more HEI and one or more IRO
• Principal Investigator can be from either an HEI or an IRO
• Further collaboration with local and regional cultural, third sector or community organisations
• Each project to be funded for up to 39 months
Discovery Projects

- Two-stage application process: outline and full
- Call specification launched in April 2020
- Deadline for outline applications: 8 September 2020
- Shortlisted outline applicants will be required to attend a workshop in early November 2020
- Deadline for full applications: 28 January 2021
- Successful projects notified late Spring 2021
- Discovery Projects must start by September 2021 and end by November 2024
- Aim is to achieve a portfolio of complementary projects that collectively are more than the sum of their parts
Discussion session

**Purpose:** to influence the final Call document through enhanced understanding of the priorities of the heritage and HEI sectors

**Questions:**

1. *What are the priorities of the heritage sector in terms of connecting collections?*

2. *What are the HEI digital humanities priorities that relate to the programme?*

3. *Beyond at least one IRO and at least one HEI, what opportunities are there for further collaboration?*

4. *Should the three areas of impact (digital search/research capability/public engagement) be weighted in the Call, and if so how?*