

MUSEUM REPORT 2015/16

2015/16



Overview of 2015/2016

The past year has been thoroughly transformative for the Royal College of Music Museum. Previous years were characterised by an effort to explore the potential of the Museum had o contribute to the profile, internal and external educational activity, and artistic strategy of the RCM through smaller scale projects and collaborations with the spaces that were available. At the same time, the Museum consolidated its identity within the wider museum community, particularly musical instrument museums in Europe and the USA and a more diversified array of collaborations in London and the UK.

June to December 2015 saw the end of this phase and the beginning of a new one, marked by the closure of the gallery and a better digital presence which will give continuity to the public presence of the Museum. The digital offer was enriched as a result of a collaboration with Google Cultural Institute, the Library and the RCM Marketing department, leading to the launch of digital exhibitions and development of a joint two-year project that received £309,000 from HEFCE and will deliver a comprehensive database of over 300 musical instrument collections and 40,000 musical instruments by 2017. This places the RCM Museum at the heart of a strong national and international network. At the same time the RCM allocated a capital grant of £15,000 to develop a public database of its collections, to be hosted on www.rcm.ac.uk, and this will be tested over the summer and launched in September 2016.

Furthermore, in December 2015 the Museum received confirmation from the Heritage Lottery Fund that an application for £4m had been accepted, This grant was to support staff and activity costs, preliminary work on the collections and new gallery/performance space/study collection that will be delivered over the next four years. The 'development phase' (Jan – June 2016) is nearly completed and a delivery phase to start later this year (Oct 2016 to May 2020), details of which will be made available through the Museum website and via social media.

Gallery, collections and collection management

Heritage Lottery Fund Grant

The HLF confirmed in December 2015 that support had been awarded to our project 'More Music: a new Museum for the Royal College of Music'. This consist of a first grant of £150,000 to support staff and consultancy costs towards the development of a full application, which will be submitted on the 15th June 2016.

The new team, in place as of 10th December 2015, now includes a Learning and Engagement officer, a Conservator and a Research Assistant, who joined the Curator, Administrator and Digitisation officer previously in place. Moreover, an experienced team of consultants was appointed after on a national tender to assist in the preparation of full activity, business, management and maintenance, collection conservation, and interpretation plans, covering the period up to the opening of the new museum, and the five years afterwards (expectedly 2024).

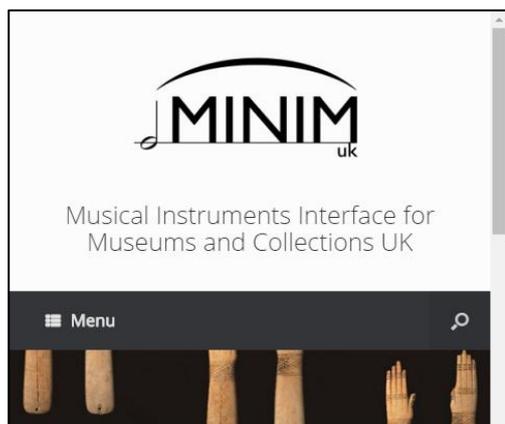
A national tender also led to the appointment of ZMMA as exhibition designers, based on the strong experience and qualification in project of international relevance such as the Watts galleries and the European Galleries at the V&A.

The full application will be submitted on the 15th June and includes support towards ca. £3m in capital costs (including new building work and fit-out of the gallery, performance space and study collection), £720 to support activities (including conservation of the collections) that will be delivered largely off-site between 2016 and 2020, and further £850,000 for related costs (contingency, inflation, etc.). Confirmation of final allocation is due by the end of September 2016.

HEFCE – MINIM Grant

The RCM was successful in a funding bid from the HEFCE Catalyst Fund to create a national network and virtual interface for musical instrument museums. The project launched in October 2015.

The aim of the project is to enhance the visibility, knowledge exchange, and educational impact of musical instrument collections throughout the UK, by providing a platform for them to deliver and present dynamic records about their holdings.



The platform aims to provide over 40,000 individual instrument records, all of which feature instrument descriptions and at least one image. Audio and video content will also be generated through the project. Project cataloguers will reach out to institutions that hold little information about their instrument collection to generate new records and rich media, highlighting important and/or hitherto unknown objects.

Project research has indicated that over 300 publicly-accessible collections exist in the UK—far higher than the initial estimate of c. 100. The directory of collections has been published online in a searchable tool, alongside agreed cataloguing standards for new records generated through field work. A Database Development Officer has been appointed to the project team and is developing and testing the structure for records, processes for harvesting large amounts of data, and implementing an easy-to-use interface for smaller collections and cataloguers to input records themselves.

The first test launch, displaying harvested data from major instrument collections, will go live in November 2016. The final platform will launch to the public in October 2017.

Project information and publications are available at www.minim.ac.uk / www.minim-uk.org



Conservation

A Conservator was appointed on the 10th December 2015 and is currently carrying out a general condition survey of the 900 musical instruments and 140 paintings from the RCM Museum collections. These have been retrieved from off-site storage and relocated in the Museum gallery where they will be stored until November 2016 facilitating access. A procedure and forms were devised and the survey, carried out by the Conservator with the assistance of two volunteers, is due for delivery by end of July 2016.

Documentation

All paper documentation relating to collections of musical instruments, paintings, and sculptures has been digitised and linked with electronic records in the collection management system. Photographs are available for all instruments, and additional photographs will be generated through the condition reports generated by Susana Caldeira.

A digitisation plan for the estimated 45,000 items of iconography outstanding has been drafted and will form part of the submission to the HLF. The plan will incorporate cataloguing and digitisation priorities advised through the work of Mimi Haddon, and through the instructions of the Documentation Plan completed in 2015.

Volunteers have supported a number of documentation processes, including generation of metadata for images, and location updates for items returning to the Museum for inspection and conservation. New interfaces have been developed for the Adlib collections management system to ease tracking of objects and packages between locations.

Digital availability of the collections

The Museum has now had a presence on MIMO for over a year, providing the primary access point for information about the instrument collections and their links to other museums in Europe. ~800 instruments are listed online. Use of the MIMO thesaurus has provided an authority for the consistent management of instrument names, makers and categories in collections management.

Information about the RCM painting collection has now migrated to ArtUK, the successor to BBC Your Paintings.

Over 2,000 images from across the collections are now available through our image licensing partner ArenaPAL. Additionally, ArenaPAL have assisted in the digitisation of many items free of charge, including albums of opera iconography and important records of piano designs from Bechstein & Co.

Enhanced, curated access to the collections is provided through Google Cultural Institute, which now features three virtual exhibitions. The exhibition on musical instruments include high-resolution photography and audio recordings. Content is also available in a standalone app from the Google Play store. A rolling programme of exhibitions will expand the visibility of content and provide new item updates, with the next output due in September 2016.

The strongly increased offer of digital resources through several partners and platforms leads to a risk of fragmentation of our resources. In order to strengthen the identity of the RCM collections as a whole, a capital grant of £15,000 was allocated by the RCM to the Museum to develop an online database which will give access to all our digital records and allow basic and advanced search. It is being developed by Surface Impression, appointed on the basis of a national tender, and will be delivered for testing over summer 2016 and public delivery by September.

Google digital exhibitions

A partnership with Google Cultural Institute was fostered by the RCM through members of Council, Directorate and the Marketing Department. It led to a strong partnership, where the RCM has been the first music-education partner of GCI with the launch of a Street-View of the Blomfield building. The Library and Museum developed three digital exhibitions that were launched in autumn 2015 with the titles 'Treasure of the Royal College of Music: the musical instrument collection', and 'Royal College of Music Composers'.

A regular plan of new digital exhibition will be rolled out starting in autumn 2016.

Off-site storage and decant of the collections

Approximately 85% of the Museum collections were stored off-site since the closure of the Centre for Performance History in 2014. These were divided between a site in north-London and one in Cheshire.

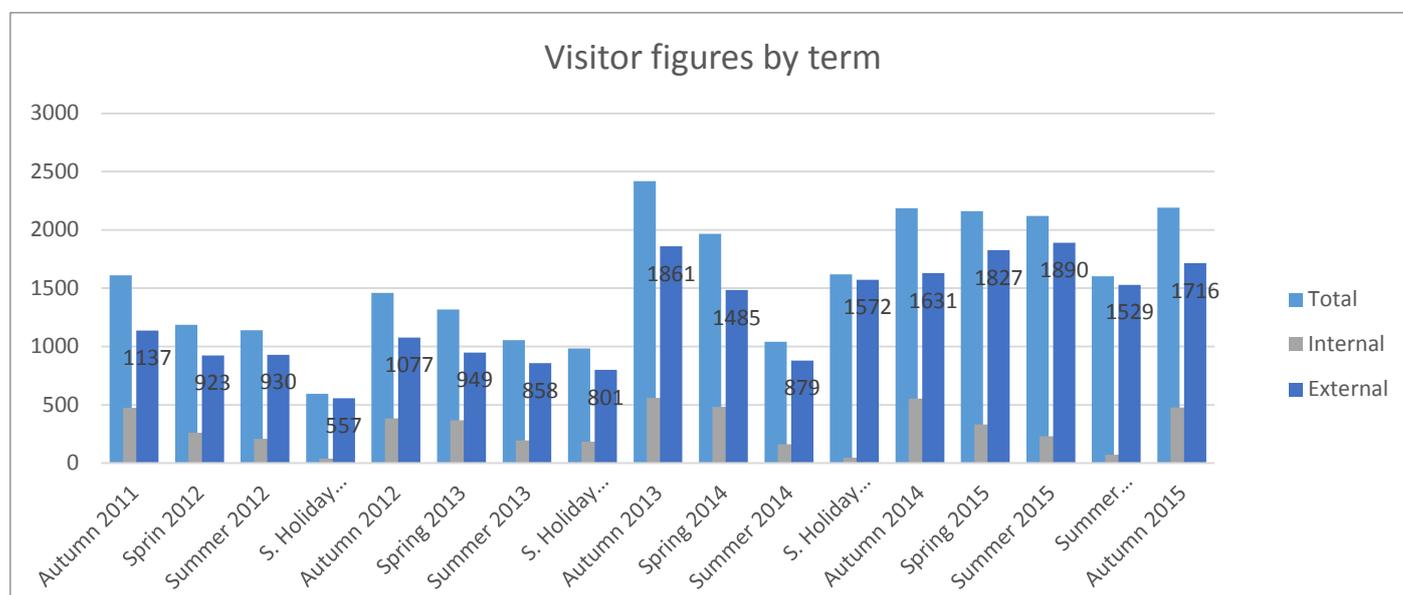
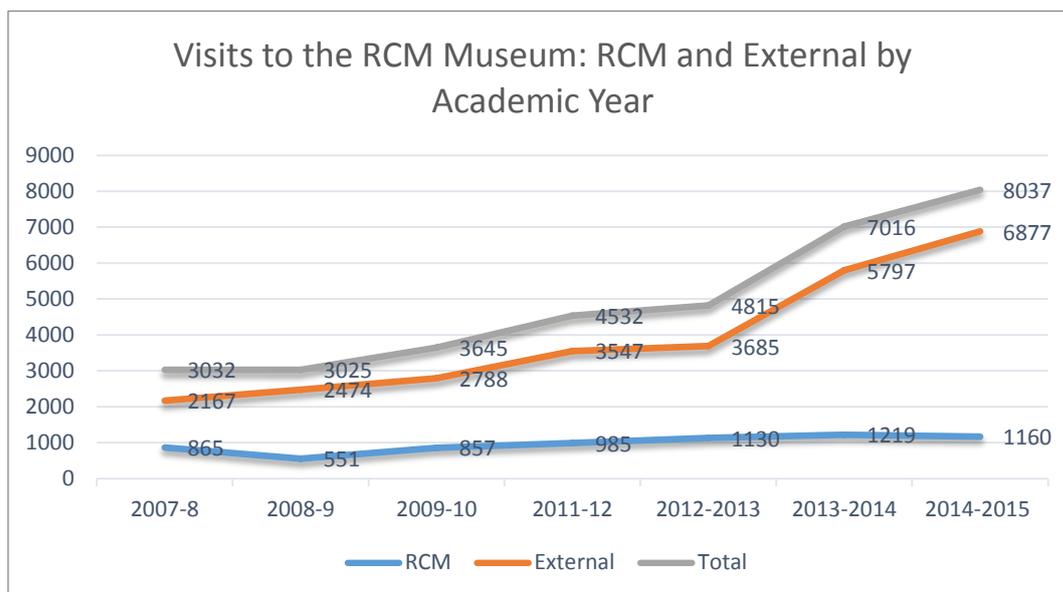
Because of the increase in material stored off-site between 2016 and 2019, and the requirements from our funding bodies, a new international tender process has been released in spring 2016 and will lead to the appointment of new storage suppliers by autumn 2016, in time for the decant of the collections from the current space.

In the meanwhile, site visits and condition checks were carried out at both off-site facilities, and a full reconciliation of inventories has been carried out for all material transferred between sites, with substantial support from the RCM Estate team.

Public engagement

Number of visitors

The visitor figures during the 2014/2015 academic year continued on the upward trend from previous years, and show an increase of external visitors, while the internal visits confirmed previous figures. The 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 academic years showed a substantial increase in external visitors. Before the museum closed in December 2015, the Autumn term saw an increase in external visitors while the internal visitors remained static compared to the last two terms.



Concerts

The Museum continued to make activity a priority in Autumn Term 2015 in order to make the most of the space before closure in December 2015.

During the Autumn Term, the Museum hosted 6 *Music in the Museum* concerts, mostly featuring students from the Historical Performance faculty performing on playable instruments in the collection, as well as 8 additional concerts (2 concerts organised by the Student Union in aid of the Syrian refugee crisis, 1 RCM early brass, 1 baroque flute, 2 harpsichord recitals, 1 professor's concert (Terence Charlston, clavichord), and a Corelli Study Day). The Museum also held one evening reception for the Development department, 2 late afternoon/evening lectures (including one *Music & Ideas* talk) and a More Music surgery.

The launch event for the new temporary exhibition, *Key Change!* attracted 63 people, which is approximately as many as the Museum can accommodate standing.

Concert/Series	Term	Attendees Autumn 2015	(Attendees Autumn 2014)
Music in the Museum	Autumn Term 2015	238	216
Other concerts (excluding children's events)	Autumn Term 2015	242	206

Masterclasses, rehearsals and teaching

Between September and December 2015, the Museum hosted 8 Historical Performance Faculty classes, 2 Lieder classes, 2 harpsichord masterclasses, 1 baroque flute masterclass, and one seminar on the subject 'Inspiration in Objects'. As with previous years, private tuition on historical instruments takes place where appropriate, this term the Museum accommodated 2 on harpsichords and one on viols. The Museum is regularly used as a rehearsal space and was able to allow for over 15 rehearsals during the Autumn Term.

Children activities

A now recognised feature of Museum activity, the Museum opened its doors to 18 children between the age of 2-5 (and 20 parents) for a half-term *Mini Music in the Museum* event, and 41 parents and children for the half term family concert which this term focussed on the flute.

Due to the high volume of activity and future planning, the Museum wasn't able to accommodate many school visits, but did host two nursery school groups for some fun musical sessions exploring musical instruments.

Guided tours and collaboration with Higher Education Institutions

The Museum gave 6 pre-booked tours to external groups and free sessions to 3 HEI institutions, Syracuse University, Goldsmiths and London Metropolitan University.

The Museum also featured as part of the visit of the Chinese First Lady, with a short performance on one of the harpsichords by Nathaniel Mander, RCM Junior Fellow in Harpsichord.

Special need visitors

The Museum enjoyed giving fun, sensory workshop for a small group of children from Perseid School, an all age London Borough of Merton day school for learners with Severe Learning Difficulties.

Exhibitions

The exhibition 'Arts in Harmony' organised with Ben Uri gallery in the previous year, enjoyed great success with the visitors and attracted substantial coverage by the press, including the Financial Time, Evening Standard, Time Out and several others, largely thanks to the efforts of our Marketing Department. It was therefore decided to prolong it over summer 2015.

The last exhibition before the museum's closure was opened in September 2015 with the title 'Key change, a new museum for the RCM' and celebrated the history of the RCM collections from their beginning at the end of the 19th century. Its design and layout were developed in collaboration with contemporary artist Hugo Dalton and many RCM departments, including Estate, Development, Marketing and Communication.

Research

Overview of collections

Since December 2015, Mimi Haddon has been conducting a survey of the collections that were added to the Museum in 2014. This led to a written report of the museum's vast iconography collections, which includes over 130 oil paintings acquired and over 300 boxes of iconographic material, including engravings, drawings, photographs, personal correspondence, memorabilia, and sheet music, totalling an estimated 45,000 individual items. This preliminary work was necessary towards the individuation of items to include in the new display, and to develop a fuller understanding of the scope of our collections to individuate research projects to be launched of the next years.

Consultation and brainstorming with researchers at King's College London, Central St Martins, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery have also provided further insight about the potential of underused and under-documented sections of our collections.

In collaboration with RCM research faculty, we are hosting an undergraduate "taster" session, with a view to integrating the museum collections in RCM student activity more broadly, culminating in a taught museum collections module.

New research strategy

Based on the recent comprehensive overview of collections and consultation, a draft for a collections' research strategy has been prepared and will undergo further discussion in the next months. This includes key elements to establish priorities in the areas of digitisation, integration of collections into RCM teaching, collaboration with other HEI, individualised research projects and collection-based activities.

It will be shared with the Collection Management Committee and with RCM Faculties in autumn 2016.

Involvement in research organisations and projects, institutional collaboration

The Museum, through its curator, is now represented on the Board of CIMCIM (the International Committee of Museums and Collections of Music and Musical Instruments), of the Galpin Society, and of the Répertoire International d'Iconographie Musicale (RIdDIM, as liaison officer with CIMCIM) and the advisory committee of Fenton House.

The curator is also member of the Scientific Committee of the Museum of the Violin in Cremona, consultant to the National Musical Instrument Museum in Rome. He served in the Scientific Committee of three international conferences organised in London (Royal College of Music, COST Action FP1302), Milan (ICOM-CIMCIM general conference), and Barcelona (Museu de la Musica).

The RCM Museum and the Courtauld Institute continue to act as UK national representative in the Management Committee of the COST Action FP1302 'Woodmusick' (www.woodmusick.org).

Conferences

In September 2015 the RCM Museum organised and hosted the international conference 'Effects of playing on early and modern musical instruments', supported by COST Action FP1302 'Woodmusick'. The conference attracted over 80 delegates from across Europe and beyond, with 5 sessions in the Britten Theatre. Abstracts of the papers are available at <http://woodmusick.org/wp-content/uploads/COST%20Conference%20booklet%20London.pdf>

External researchers

The museum hosted 17 external researchers during the 2014/2015 academic year. The researchers originated predominantly from the United Kingdom, with several outliers from continental Europe and one researcher from the United States of America. As the result of research undertaken by Dr Rachel Beckles Willson from Royal Holloway, it was discovered that the Ud in the collection (RCM 015) is one of the few surviving instruments attributed to Youssef Nahhat, a maker from Syria. This new information about the provenance of the instrument has substantial implications for the historical significance of this particular instrument and the Donaldson collection as a whole.

Resources

Staff

The RCM Museum relies on two members of staff, a curator and a museum administrator, with full time and permanent contracts supported by the RCM. A digitisation officer and a Museum assistant were hired in 2014 to assist in the delivery of the Museum strategy until August 2016.

The increased requirements related to the delivery of the HEFCE funded MINIM Project have led to the position of digitisation officer being supplanted by that of a research assistant who is more broadly supporting the Museum digital needs in this area.

Furthermore, in order to deliver the HLF full submission, a Learning and Engagement officer, a Conservator and a Researcher have joined the Curator and Museum Administrator until the 16th June 2016. These positions will also form part of the Delivery phase of the HLF project, until spring 2020.

Volunteers

Prior to the closure, museum volunteers were an integral part of the visitor experience, and were responsible for collecting basic visitor data and safeguarding the instruments in the gallery. In addition to invigilation, museum volunteers assisted with administrative tasks and were supervised and managed by the Museum Assistant and the Museum Administrator. Volunteers were primarily recruited from within the RCM student body as well as the Kensington and Chelsea volunteering centre. After an informal interview process, volunteers were given an induction session by the Museum assistant.

During the 2015 summer vacation, the museum recruited additional members of the volunteer team to ensure that the museum would have invigilation cover for the busy Proms period. Four additional volunteers were recruited for this, many of whom were external students, looking to gain short-term work experience in the arts and heritage sector. During this same period, the museum also recruited 6 paid gallery assistants who were responsible for the delivering exit interviews as part of our visitor survey. These assistants were recruited from within the RCM student body, and were given two training sessions prior to beginning their roles.

As part of the HLF supported redevelopment ("More Music: Reimagining the Royal College of Music Museum"), the museum recruited a total of 9 volunteers to assist in projects relating to digitization, research, cataloguing and conservation. These volunteers were recruited using a variety of platforms, such as the job opportunities section of the Museum's Association website, Indeed.co.uk, TeamLondon.gov, and the volunteering opportunities boards on the local volunteering centre websites. The museum received a total of 30 applications for the positions. In addition to receiving training for their core tasks, volunteers received a health and safety induction. Due to the wide-ranging and complex nature of their tasks, they are supervised by members of the museum team, while their timetables and training requirements are managed by the Museum Administrator.