

MUSEUM REPORT 2016/17

2016/17



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Overview of 2016/2017

This past year has been a watershed in the history of the RCM Museum of Music. After three years of preparation, the Museum gallery – the earliest purpose built music museum in the UK – closed to leave space for the creation of the new RCM Museum. The new gallery is due to be reopened between 2019 and 2020 as part of the More Music redevelopment of the East wing of the College. Over 15,000 historical items have been individually checked, documented and packed before the decanting of all collections to an off-site storage facility, selected after a six month tender process.

This is the first step of a transformation that will lead to a Museum with greatly improved access, directly from the main entrance of the College. The state of the art display will feature an updated concept based on three different spaces: a gallery with interactive display, temporary exhibitions and educational areas; a climate controlled performance space for public performances on the instruments of the collections and an accessible storage to support research on our study collections.

However, a new space is merely the hardware required for the development of a new and up to date museum. Much work remains to be done over the next few years in order to develop contents and an identity that can reflect the excellence of the RCM through its collections. The main focus of our activity is now on the development of contents for the exhibition display as well as on its digital interpretation, the digitisation and public access to the collections, the conservation and preparation of the items for display and the study collection, and the development and testing of the multitude of activities and educational offers that will be delivered by and through the Museum within and outside the College, to schools, families and a variety of target visitors that have been identified over the past few years.

Little of this would have been possible without the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The redevelopment of the RCM Museum is a ring-fenced element within the major More Music project. The second-round application was arguably the most notable accomplishment of the Museum team for the past year, and was obtained through the preparation of over 1,500 pages of documentation in circa six months and leading to a grant of over £3.6m, one of the largest ever invested in the redevelopment of a music museum in the UK.

Not all energies have been absorbed by this activity. The meanwhile the Museum has continued to lead and develop the MINIM project (Musical Instrument Interface for Museums and Collections) – a HEFCE-supported national project in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Music, the Horniman Museum and the University of Edinburgh to create a single access point to over 20,000 musical instruments in 150 public collections. This will further strengthen the role of the RCM Museum within the network of museums, which is a key element of its medium-term strategy also pursued through an increase of loans to major temporary exhibitions (including this year the Wellcome Trust), as well as the museum's participation in international research projects (such as the COST-EU funded project WoodMuslCK) and membership in scientific committees of other museums and societies (including the Galpin Society, Fenton House of the National Trust, several museums in the UK and abroad). The international role of the RCM Museum has also been strengthened this year by the appointment of its Curator as Chair of the International Committee of Music Museums of the International Council of Museums, the museum-related branch of UNESCO.

The focus of next year will be to progress and in some cases complete the activities outlined above, with an increased focus on research on a selections of our items and on the collections in general. To this aim, a full time Research Assistant will be recruited before autumn 2017. We will also recruit a number of volunteers, interns and advanced students who will participate in the delivery of the educational, digitisation and conservation plans. At the same time, the first fully funded PhD student will start his or her work in the new programme on Music and Material Culture which is a further development of the research and study initiatives harboured by the RCM Museum.

Overall the period 2016–2017 has been a year of substantial accomplishments and transformations thanks to the enthusiastic work of the Museum team – currently formed by a Curator, Administrator, Conservator, Learning and Education Officer, and Digitisation Officer – by the constant support from and collaboration with the other RCM departments – in particular the Library, Development and Alumni Engagement, Historical Performance Faculty, ICT, Estates, Finance, Marketing and Communication.

Gallery, collections and collection management

Heritage Lottery Fund Grant

In October 2016 the RCM was awarded a grant of £3,634,418 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to support the redevelopment of its Museum.

This was the outcome of a two-stage application process. The first round application awarded £182,000 to develop and submit of all required plans and documentation by mid-June 2016 to coincide with the timelines within the 'More Music' redevelopment project.

The funding awarded after the second-round application will cover elements of both the capital redevelopment and of the related activities, content development and work on the collections. It will fund the costs of construction and fit-out of the new gallery, as well as a climate controlled performance space and study collection, the development of digital resources, texts and interpretation required for the new display and online accessibility, the delivery of an extensive education plan to expand the reach of the Museum both within and outside the RCM, and the digitisation of over 20,000 items from the collection to be made available through the RCM website. The HLF will also fund the conservation of over 160 musical instruments, paintings and other items from the collections either for display or for the study collection as well as the cost of extra staffing required to cover competencies related to the above work, until one year after the opening of the Museum at the end of 2019 or early 2020.

HEFCE – MINIM Grant

The Museum is leading the MINIM-UK project (Musical Instrument Interface for Museum and Collections) funded by the HEFCE Catalyst Fund in October 2015 for two years.

The aim of the project – developed in partnership with the Royal Academy of Music, the Horniman Museum and Gardens and the University of Edinburgh – 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 20,000 individual instrument records from at least 150 public collections in the UK, all of which feature instrument descriptions and at least one image.

The project has now reached over half of its life and delivered a full review of the UK collections holding musical instruments – whose number has been updated from ca. 100 to over 400 –, cataloguing standards, a web-site, and over 5,000 records harvested or newly generated from 75 collections.

Two cataloguers, Matthew Hill and Ana Silva, were appointed in August 2016 on a one-year contract to visit collections and support cataloguing and digitisation of their instruments. They have visited 15 collections thus far. A minimum of 13 more collections will be visited by the end of their contracts generating a total of over 4,000 records about instruments that are otherwise not recorded online.

The project commissioned new audio and video recordings, with a section of the project budget funding studio time, in collaboration with the RCM Studios, to record the Museum's collection of historic keyboard instruments, played by Professor Terence Charlston. The project is supporting new recordings at the Royal Academy of Music Museum, Horniman Museum, and Edinburgh University, being completed in Summer 2017.

The final platform will launch to the public in October 2017.

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



Figure 1: MINIM-UK cataloguer collection visits

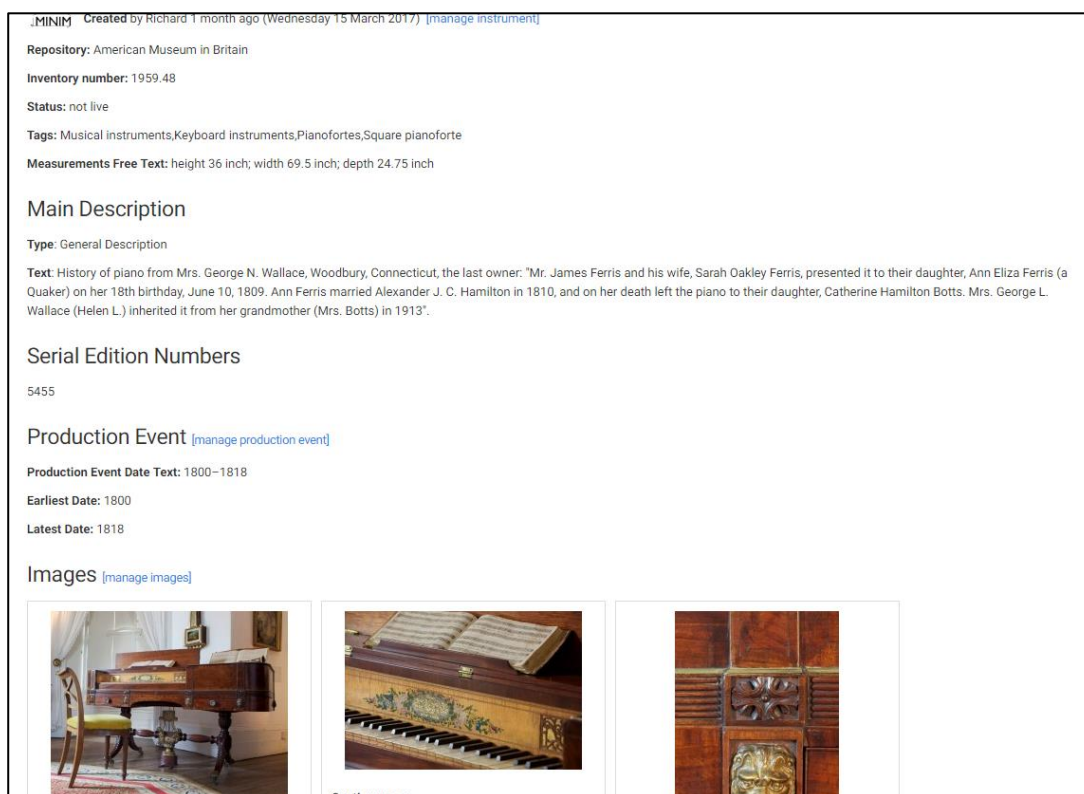
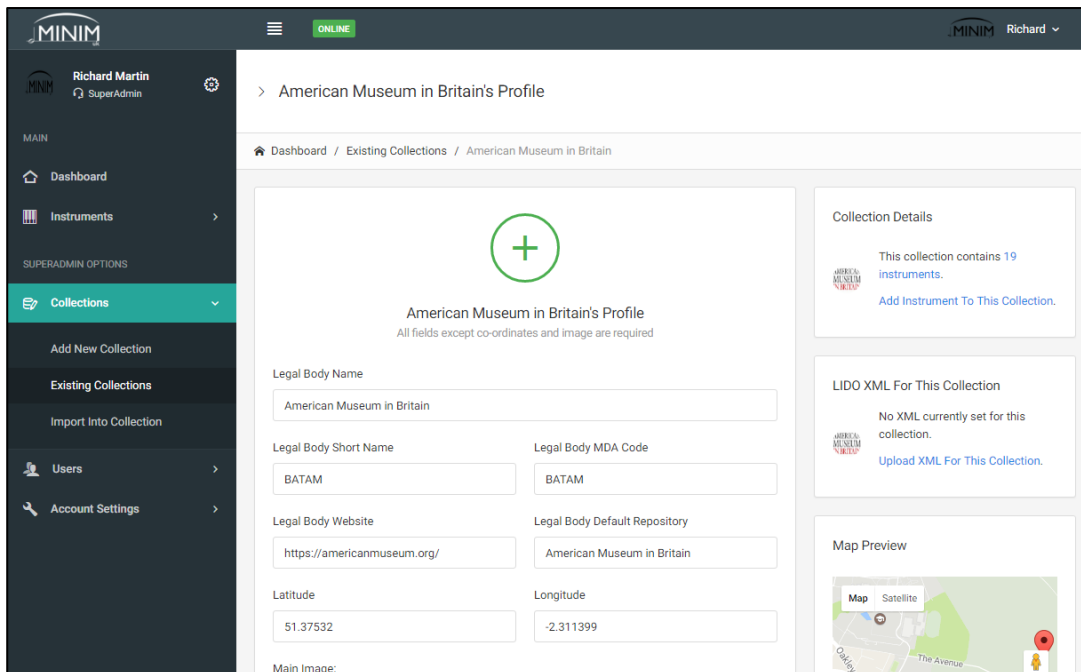


Figure 2: The MINIM-UK collection and objects administration tool

Conservation

The RCM collections have relied for decades on occasional conservation work undertaken by external specialists in exceptional cases. However, the large majority of instruments did not receive any conservation or maintenance for several decades. Over the past year a conservator specialised in musical instruments has been planning the conservation work on the collections for the next years, setting up a dedicated workshop at the RCM as well as coordinating the packing and decanting of the collections within the RCM and off-site as required by the More Music College redevelopment. Some instruments were also conserved for temporary exhibitions and loaned for major exhibitions to the Wellcome Trust, the Royal Academy of Music and Winchester College. Consulting work has also been offered to the Royal Albert Hall.

Condition survey and conservation planning

Over 15,000 items from the Collections – musical instruments, paintings, sculptures and paper material – were examined and their condition recorded, sometimes with the production of photographic documentation. This was required in order to prioritise and assess the conservation needs of the collections to be addressed over the next years and plan decanting and off-site storage need according to the object's conditions. Remedial conservation, gluing loose parts of instruments in risk of further damage was undertaken as well. The work was undertaken with the support of two conservation volunteers: Douglas McMillan and Keith Bowen.

The results of this work and the plan that ensued were recorded in a formal Conservation Plan. This offers a working guide that covers the main needs, requirements and procedures for the present and future conservation of the collection.

During this period all basic materials and equipment required to set up a conservation workshop were purchased with the assistance of the HLF grant. A temporary conservation area was set up in the museum gallery. Following the closure of the gallery, a new dedicated conservation workshop has now been built in the RCM South Wing and will be used over the next three years to work on the collections.



*Figure 3: Image of Mandolin RCM 110 for Condition Survey documentation
Figure 4: Image of Viola d'Amore RCM 33 for condition Survey documentation.*



*Figure 5 (left): Keith Bowen surveying the condition and playability of a clarinet.
Figure 6 (right): Douglas MacMillan surveying the condition of a flageolet.*



Figure 7: Sarah Small on June 14, 2016, playing the collection viol made by Barack Norman Viol, London, 1693, RCM 937, gift from Jane Kessler, during her final recital.

Loans to temporary exhibitions

Two instruments from the collections have been conserved and lent to temporary exhibition:

- A glass harmonica (RCM 152), for a loan to the Wellcome Trust as part of the exhibition *Bedlam: the Asylum and Beyond*, from 15 September 2016 to 15 January 2017.
- A coiled trumpet (RCM 865), to go on loan to an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Music for a temporary exhibition celebrating the 70th anniversary of the London Bach Society between September 2016 and February 2017.

Four viols donated to the RCM by Jane Kessler in 2009 were sent for conservation to John Topham, guest-conservator for these instruments. Also, as part of a collaboration with the Royal Albert Hall, a trumpet at the opening of the RAH on the 29 March 1871 was conserved and prepared for display.



Figure 8 and 9 (left): Glass Harmonica – RCM 152 –prior to and during conservation.

Figure 10 (right): Coiled trumpet – RCM 865, before conservation.



Figure 11: trumpet played at the opening of the Royal Albert Hall, 29 March 1871. Image obtained at <http://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/news/2016/may/from-the-archives-the-trumpet-played-at-the-opening-of-the-royal-albert-hall-29-march-1871/>

Documentation

The Digitisation Plan, submitted in preparation of the HLF Delivery Phase, provides the strategy for cataloguing, digitisation, and long-term digital preservation of the Museum's iconography collections.

The Adlib collection management system underwent a major software upgrade to ensure improved efficiency for entry of new hierarchical records when digitising the iconography collections. In addition, a number of in-house improvements to the Adlib collections management system have been undertaken in preparation for the next round of digitisation:

- All box storage and location information has been imported, superseding use of the former CPH Master Inventory.
- Implementation of the British Museum materials thesaurus, providing an authority for object material types

Import of name authorities on all persons currently known to be represented in the RCM's iconography collections (including birth/death dates, nationalities, and occupations)

Digital availability of the collections

The Museum has partnered with Surface Impression to develop an online catalogue system to present its collections on an object-by-object level through its website. As part of the Adlib software upgrade, an associated API has been installed to allow connectivity with our online catalogue. The project experienced a lengthy delay due to installation and compatibility problems with this API, which were resolved in February 2017 thanks to close collaboration with the RCM ICT team, and the catalogue will launch in May 2017. In the long-term, this API can be used by external researchers to

harvest machine-readable data about the RCM collections, and to be integrated with applications created by other developers.

Digitisation of the collections has improved engagement through publication of individual items and themes through social media publications, as described in the *Public engagement* section.

Volunteer support in autumn 2016 assisted with the generation of metadata for c.800 images. ArenaPAL has undertaken digitisation of a number of key iconography sets, including the Herbert Howells, Norman O'Neill, and Esther Fisher collections of photographs. In total, the number of images available for license through ArenaPAL is now over 3,000.

The Museum collection of musical instruments is also fully available through the MIMO website, an international online catalogue harvesting over 50,000 records about musical instruments in 30 of the most relevant collections in the world.

The content of the museum's webpages has been revised in order to emphasize the museum's digital presence and planned events during the closure period. The project has been a joint effort with the Marketing and Communication Department, which advised on a new structure as well as an ideal text length and style. We expect these changes to the website to be complete at the end of April 2017 to coincide with the launch of the online catalogue.

Recording of keyboard instruments

The Museum has started an extensive plan to record – and when possible video-record – all playable instruments in the collections. The results will be used in the new Museum display, made available through the online catalogue and temporary exhibitions and enrich the documentation of the collections.



Between November and December 2016 six keyboard instruments – harpsichord, spinets and clavichords – were recorded by professor Terrence Charlston in the RCM Studios and the recordings and video-recordings are currently being edited.

Figure 12: Terrence Charlston at the Kirkman harpsichord in the RCM studios.

Google digital exhibitions

To honour International Women's day, Museum Administrator Erin McHugh curated a digital exhibition via the museum's Google Arts page. The exhibition, entitled 'Beautiful Subjects/Beautiful Objects', explores how images of female music-making comment on gender roles throughout history. In addition to acting as a point of interest for curious attendees to the events hosted by the RCM, it was also a way of showcasing the college's collection of iconography. The exhibition had a positive response on social media and was also showcased via Classical-music.com, the online presence of BBC Music Magazine. It is now hosted on the museum's webpages alongside 'Treasures of the Royal College of Music- The Musical Instrument Collection.

At the time of writing, Royal College of Music items on the Google Arts & Culture platform received 6,276 views in the last 90 days. The most popular exhibition was *Beautiful Objects / Beautiful Subjects*, which received 314 views in the last 90 days.

Off-site storage and decant of the collections

Between spring and summer 2016 a formal tender process led to the appointment of Harrow Green and Restore, respectively, for the packing and decanting and for the off-site storage of the Museum collections over the next years.

Preparation for the decant included cleaning of objects, especially disassembling the keyboard instruments, vacuuming, checking for pests or mould, and making sure all parts would be secure for transportation.

All objects were documented, records were created or updated in the collection management system and then packed either in purpose-built crates or in acid-free boxes by or under the control of the Conservator. The entire Museum team collaborated in the packing and decanting, as well as the piano-workshop team, together with Melissa Gerber-Venter, House Manager, Estates and Facilities, who assisted with documentation.



Figure 13: Documentation for condition survey of RCM 284. Although not always possible to produce the same type of images, almost all objects were surveyed before going to storage; those that weren't surveyed were checked for major issues before packing.



Figure 14(left): Image of the museum preparing for the first load. Boxes were cleaned and barcoded at the entrance. Figure 15 (right): Copy of the Clavicytherium 1973, RCM0002- during (left) and packed (right) in a Museum quality crate.



Figure 16: RCM0171 Belchior Dias Guitar being packed in a box made by the museum conservator that then placed inside the Museum Quality Crate. Foam was used to support weight and pressure as well as to reduce the effects of temperature and humidity fluctuations.

Public engagement

Activities

A number of Heritage Lottery Funded activity projects have been launched this year and are outlined below:

Teacher Ambassador Programme

This programme aims to share knowledge to maximise the teaching potential of the Museum collections in a school or museum setting. We aim to support formal and informal learning through heritage, with a view to creating and developing imaginative learning resources with ambassador teachers, and piloting all workshops and resources free of charge with ambassador classes to build a sustainable heritage learning programme.

This year we recruited five Teacher Ambassadors from Early Years Foundation Stage to KS4 from local schools within the Tri-borough, and launched the programme in December 2016 with a meet & greet. Here we outlined the project aims and gave teachers a first introduction to our HLF project and our collections. The teachers will return to the RCM on Friday 12 May for a Learning Day. We will give them an overview of the collections and explore ways in which objects (specifically RCM Museum objects) can be used to teach the national curriculum.

Museum Roadshow

Our Roadshow is how we will share our collections and reach new audiences while our new museum is being built, bringing our heritage stories to life through pop-up displays and engaging events. The Roadshow will be touring different venues from December 2017 to September 2019.

We have outlined our Roadshow offer in order to present partners with a clear idea of the type and content of our activities. We have also begun to meet with partners to discuss how the Roadshow will look in each venue, and started to draft a timetable. Partners include, among others, the Southbank Centre, the National Trust, Kensington Central Library, and we have recently been discussing a potential partnership with the National Churches Trust.

Junior Programmes Partnership

The RCM already forges a learning pathway from early years to postgraduate and beyond through its Junior Programmes department. Through a multi-faceted partnerships, the Museum plans to use its spaces, heritage collections and expertise to engage with JD and Sparks audiences, and potentially introduce a Museum element to a number of pre-existing or new programmes.

With the dawn of a new Museum activity programme, it is important for the Museum to have a close partnership with Junior Programmes to ensure a well-knit learning offer across the College. Contacts are now being developed with the Junior Programmes team to map out this future partnership.

West Dean College Partnership

We aim to offer conservation internships as soon as the conservation workshop is set up, and will be meeting with West Dean College to clarify the details of our partnership and to discuss producing films of instrument making.

Communication

It is hugely important that the Museum maintains clear communication with its audiences and stakeholders, particularly as we are committed to audience development work even whilst there is no museum and the collections are in storage.

Social Media

The majority of Museum marketing and communication goes out as part of wider RCM Marcomms. The Museum has a Twitter account @RCMMuseum and uses the hashtag #RCMMuseum where possible for tweets from both this account and the RCM main account.

	No. of tweets/posts	Total no. of impressions/post clicks	Total no. of Engagements (i.e. replies, likes, comments, shares, retweets)	Reach
RCM Twitter account	13	42,076	1065	
Museum Twitter account	44	29,234	723	
RCM Facebook	3	1191	841	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16.5K • 5.3k • 7.8k

- Museum Twitter account has increased followers from 301 to 371 between October 2016 and March 2017
- Museum Twitter number of followers equals about 1.75% of the RCM's 20k+ followers
- The Museum sends approximately 4-5 tweets per week on average

- Number of impressions per tweet: performed 11.7% better than expected this quarter
- Number of engagements per tweet: performed 18% better than expected this quarter

Over the next quarter we will be looking to increase our following, keep the rate of communication consistent and encourage all members of the team, including volunteers, to contribute new content. We are refining our goals for reporting with our Marketing team in order to focus our social media content and have an online presence that is more effective and responsive.

Website

The museum area had 5,183 page views and 4,112 unique page views from 13 October 2016 to 31 January 2017. The museum pages are currently being revised and restructured to better reflect the activity of the coming few years.

News items and blog

The Museum sent out the following news items:

- Heritage Lottery Fund Success
- RCM Museum Staff Explore Possibility of New Acquisitions
- RCM Museum Embarks on Recording Project
- RCM's MINIM-UK Cataloguers visit Collections Around the UK
- RCM Museum launches Teacher Ambassador Programme

We have yet to receive complete readership statistics, but have implemented a Bitly link system to measure how many reads come from links shared on social media. These have been modest but we hope to improve this over the coming months. The Museum and Marcomm Department are working together on the launch a blog with informative content and a more informal tone in the coming weeks. In the meanwhile, content will temporarily be released as News content.

Research

Involvement in research organisations and projects, institutional collaboration

The Museum, through its curator, has been elected in summer 2016 to chair for three years the International Committee of Music Museums (CIMCIM) of ICOM (the International Council of Museums and a branch of UNESCO). It is also represented on the Boards of the Galpin Society, the Répertoire International d'Iconographie Musicale (RidDIM) and the advisory committee of Fenton House, one of the London-based properties of the National Trust.

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 two international conferences organised in 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).

External researchers

Due to space constraints resulting from the decant process, it was not been possible to host external researchers to the extent it has been able to in previous years. Nevertheless, the museum was able to accommodate 7 research visits from external scholars, the majority of which were based at institutions within continental Europe.

Resources

Staff

The Museum team is currently formed by a Curator, an Administrator, a Learning and Engagement Officer and a Conservator, all working full time. The team will grow further over the next year, in line with the roadmap planned for the delivery of the Museum redevelopment, with the recruitment of a dedicated digitisation officer, tasked with the coordination and implementation of a 20,000 item digitisation programme, and a Research Assistant to support the development of the Museum's research profile through publications, content development for digital and other resources and to support the Curator in the preliminary work required to develop contents for the new Museum.

Volunteers

The museum retained a team of 6 volunteers for a four-month period during its HLF-funded development phase. These volunteers assisted with the research, conservation and digital initiatives which contributed to the production of an overview of the iconography collection as well as condition surveys for instruments prior to the decant.

The redevelopment of the Museum in the next years relies on a large number of volunteers to collaborate in the digitisation, conservation, organisation and management of the collections and the recruitment of new volunteers has now started. In Autumn 2016, a recruitment and training tool kit was created as a guide for members of staff working with volunteers. We have also printed a volunteer handbook to support and streamline the activity of new volunteers. These materials were circulated amongst the museum team ahead of the first recruitment cycle for volunteers in April 2017. The opportunities are being advertised on the College's website, the Museums Association website, Indeed.com, and TeamLondon (the city of London's volunteering portal).