

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service: Case Study

Museum: Norwich Castle Study Centre

Project: Rationalisation of the Costume and Textile Collection

Why we did it: In 2010 the decision was taken to move the Costume and Textile Collection from Carrow House to the Norwich Castle Study Centre, thereby creating one centrally located site housing all the stored collections of the museums service. As well as cost savings, the aim was to increase use of this wonderful collection by both staff and public and to promote opportunities for cross discipline events with other curatorial departments.

What we delivered: Our initial focus was ensuring the collection's short and long term storage requirements were met. Tasks undertaken included: re-rolling our 90 rolled textiles onto larger and uniformly sized poles; re-packing hanging costumes with padded hangers and custom made bags, (a process supported by volunteers from the Costume and Textile Association, saving £5,000); and reorganising storage boxes to eliminate dead space, reducing the overall number by over 100. The collections location audit which had begun in 2007 was completed, ensuring each object has a unique number and recorded location.

Who benefited: Since the move, there has been a marked increase in the use of our stored collections, especially by students from Norwich University College of the Arts. Over 550 costume and textile related visits were made in 2012-13. The level access provided by the new storage facilities is also enabling more disabled visitors to fully enjoy the collection. Learning staff are making more use of the handling collection, benefiting themselves and their participants, while volunteers from the Costume and Textile Association had a unique opportunity to be involved in a real collections storage improvement project.

What happened next: We are now able to provide a high quality access service every day of the week and see groups in several different spaces according to their needs. The collections are also more visible to colleagues and are therefore more likely to be used for sessions or exhibitions. Above all, the improvements to collections storage and documentation are enabling us to develop new ways to use the collections creatively and so broaden audiences.

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“I had a great time with you... I loved Carrow House but I can see so many advantages at the Study Centre.”

Member of the Great Yarmouth Stitches

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS) is a multi-award winning service comprising **ten museums and a study centre**. The Service aims to inform and inspire people's interest in the cultural and natural heritage of Norfolk, and address relevant contemporary issues by:

- **Collecting, preserving and interpreting material evidence of the past**
- **Stimulating creativity, inspiration and enjoyment**
Providing an enjoyable way to learn throughout life
- **Engaging with the widest possible audience**
- **Enriching people's lives and creating a sense of place and identity**
- **Enabling people to understand and value other cultures**

It is a high performing service. In 2010/11 **380,000** visits were made to the museums, and **43,000** schoolchildren participated in formal learning events.

The Norfolk Museums Service was established in 1974 when the County and District Councils in Norfolk agreed to delegate their museum powers to a Joint Committee to manage museums through a county-wide Museums

Service. The museums in each district are managed by local Area Museum Managers who liaise closely with each District and ensure that the museums support local strategies and initiatives.

NMAS is one of only 16 Major Partner Museums receiving substantial revenue funding from Arts Council England in order to achieve ACE's vision for museums:

"A museums sector that is delivering inspiring public programmes using high quality collections to reach more and more people, especially children and young people. The sector is innovative; it shares best practice and is embedded in communities and responsive to audience needs. It is made up of strong, sustainable organisations with a highly skilled and diverse workforce; it is excellently led."

For more information contact:

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