

STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2015

INTRODUCTION

The National Portrait Gallery has recently pursued a programme of substantial development. The first phase, from 1987 to 2003, renewed the building and public services, adding a whole new dimension to the Gallery in the form of the Wolfson Gallery and the Ondaatje Wing and transforming the way the building is used. The second phase has, since 2003, concentrated on investing in the Collection and developing staff skills, while extending the Gallery's work outward, increasing the range of the research, learning, exhibition, partnership, information and access programmes. The Gallery has reached out to the world with more ambitious exhibitions and digital programmes, producing a substantially enhanced public and media profile. In 2008 the Gallery enjoyed more than 1.8m visits to the St Martin's Place building - a second year in a row with more than 1.65m - and a total of 14 million visits to its website. This was achieved while having continuing support from government, but also, crucially, through a very considerable increase in funds raised from exhibition ticketing, sponsorship, events, catering, retail and publishing together with growing support from individual donors and foundations.

The Gallery's overall aim (derived from the provisions of the 1992 Museums and Galleries Act) is 'to promote through the medium of portraits the appreciation and understanding of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture, and ...to promote the appreciation and understanding of portraiture in all media'. In 2003, in order to re-examine how this should best be achieved, the Trustees discussed a sequence of papers covering policy matters relating to the Collection and research, exhibitions and displays, learning and access, national and digital programmes, buildings and staffing, and finance, communication and development. These papers have set the Gallery's course for the past five years.

Given that there is much still to achieve, it is now time to set out the renewed ambitions of the Gallery for the next seven years, to 2015. This new Strategic Plan describes the next phase – and the ways in which these ambitions can best be pursued given the current scale and resources of the organisation, and the prospect of economic uncertainty. It will be complemented by a rolling three year Corporate Plan linked to more detailed departmental plans. However, the Strategic Plan also shows a determination to increase the capability of the Gallery through improving its sustainability - whether social, financial or physical sustainability.

The Gallery is a museum of people with a vision to promote inspiration through recognising and understanding human achievement and diversity. It seeks to be outstanding in what it does – from learning programmes and visitor services to acquisitions, staff development and research developments – and is determined to develop in a way that is well-ordered, self-critical and achievable.

AUDIENCES AND THE COLLECTION

Extending audiences for the various parts of the Gallery's work lies at the heart of its success as an institution. The concept of a *national* collection relates both to excellent presentation in London, but also to achieving a greater spread of work out beyond the Gallery, physically and digitally. Equally important has been the focus on the Collection, with outstanding

acquisitions ranging from the group portrait of Omai, Banks and Solander, to portraits of John Donne, John Fletcher, Richard Arkwright and Mary Seacole. This has been complemented by an enhanced research programme. Alongside the traditional portrait media of painting and sculpture more digital and new media portraits are being added, together with more photographic portraits in both the Primary and Reference collections. This has been made possible because of the expertise and energy of the curatorial team, supported by energetic fund-raising, considerable help from The Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, key individual donors and the growing contribution of the Portrait Fund. The number of the Gallery's own commissions varies from year to year, but the ambition of the programme has grown, as also its critical and public appreciation.

PROGRAMMES

The inventive programme of exhibitions and displays (along with creative marketing and more consistent interpretation and participative activities) has helped produce increased visitor figures at St Martin's Place. And the development of the national programme has allowed more portraits to be shown around the country, re-invigorated the special relationship with the National Trust, produced more consistent work with key city museums, and created two strategic relationships, with the North East and South West hubs.

The growth of portraits featured on the web (currently 115,854 portraits, of which 58,136 are illustrated) has helped power the number of web visits (now more than 14 million each year). In early 2009 the Gallery's website is being re-launched. The prospect of a country in which high speed access will become commonplace - a world ever-more connected through digital communication - reinforces the importance of investment in extending the Gallery's digital provision.

SPACES AND RESOURCES

Since the programme to renew the ground floor spaces, the bold creation of the Ondaatje Wing and the opening of the Weldon rooms, the Gallery has concentrated on improvements rather than major changes to the building. Staff accommodation was reorganised in 2003, following agreement with the National Gallery for the East Wing space to be used as offices for the Trading department. In 2008 the work was completed to make the First Floor Landing fully accessible, which also connects to these East Wing spaces.

As the number of visits has grown, public spaces and facilities have been under considerable pressure. In recent years, the Gallery has created larger-scale temporary exhibitions, extending out from the Wolfson space into the Lerner Galleries, on an annual basis. Particularly at weekends, the Gallery is fully stretched. A wider review of space and facilities will follow on from a study already being undertaken on the arrangements for retail and new work on audience development. The Gallery has at the same time been endeavouring - with new waste arrangements, new boilers and chillers - to reduce its energy usage.

In terms of support and services, recent attention has focused on how to improve storage, frame conservation and technical facilities. These discussions have focused on the Tate's National Art Collections Centre project in which the Gallery is a key partner. Although currently on hold, while Tate re-examines options for the development of its estate, it represents an exceptional opportunity for beneficial collaboration.

FINANCES

Over the previous five years the DCMS has awarded the Gallery above average increases in Grant-in-Aid, just matching inflation. However, the Gallery has still been trying to reach basic levels of staffing and to catch up with the other national museums in terms of public services and core administration.

In the same period the Gallery has taken dramatic steps in earning more income from visitors to the Gallery (through retail, catering and events; also from publishing and picture library) and from corporate supporters, trusts, foundations and individuals. Self-generated income from all sources and government support are now about equal. Long term interests have also begun to be served with the Portrait Fund (now standing at over £4m) to support the development of the Collection. In 2008 the Lerner Gift was announced – the most significant recent major donation.

The success in increasing the range and depth of the Gallery's programmes of activity – whether sharing the Collection, undertaking outreach work, or enhancing the relevance and creativity of special displays – has increased expenditure. The economic climate and cost pressures look very challenging, making it imperative to reduce costs and to increase the Gallery's ability to produce sustained increases in income by extending recognition for the identity and quality of its work.

CONCLUSION

The United Kingdom has enjoyed a ten year period of dynamic change in the role and services offered by museums. From buildings to management, much has been transformed. Developments in England for the next decade will be guided by the Museums Strategy to be published in 2009 by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, together with the review of the Renaissance programme. But whatever the policies, the years ahead will be challenging. There is a reduction in Lottery funds and constrained government funding, while the worsening financial climate and fears about climate change have understandably caused previous assumptions about expansion to be questioned.

Nevertheless, many of the background indicators remain very strong for the Gallery: the extension of higher education, the Cultural Olympiad, a focus on citizenship and social integration, the issues of British-ness, the popularity of photography, and a wide interest in biography, identity and portraiture itself.

All of these will continue to reinforce the importance of, and opportunity for, the National Portrait Gallery's work as an institution of international significance.

Sandy Nairne
Director

February 2009

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THEMES

The Strategic Plan sets out what will be achieved across functional areas of the Gallery's work. There are, however, a number of themes which apply more broadly:

Inspiration ... recognising the inspirational lives recorded in the Gallery's collection of portraits

Innovation and risk-taking ... including commissioning portraits, new areas of community work, and debates in the public programmes

Diversity ... increasing the diversity of those in represented in the Collection, and the diversity of our staffing, audiences and those we work with

Enterprise and expertise ... applying energy and creativity across programmes and services

Continuity ... developing services which build on what has been well-trying and tested

Engagement ... increasing the opportunity for visitors, community participants, volunteers and staff members to have an ongoing relationship with the Gallery's work

Partnership ... working with key organisations in the development of the national programme, research and in financial support from the corporate sector and from individuals

Sustainability ... ensuring that public benefit is produced for the long term

Advocacy ... increasing awareness of the National Portrait Gallery amongst key decision-makers and potential visitors

OBJECTIVES

The Gallery has six strategic objectives which derive from the Gallery's statutory obligations and provide the foundation around which the Gallery's Funding Agreements with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have been framed. These objectives structure the ambitions of this Strategic Plan and will remain for the foreseeable future. Within this framework we have identified additional, more aspirational - and longer term - ambitions which the Gallery wants to achieve over the next seven years.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY - STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2015

OBJECTIVES -

1 To extend and broaden the range of audiences for the National Portrait Gallery and its work through access and learning, a higher national and public profile, and effective communication.

Broaden participation

Maintain annual attendance above 1.6m and move towards 2m visits, relieving overcrowding by providing incentives for visiting in the mornings and the early part of the week and, if affordable, adding Saturday evening opening

Develop further creative marketing, including innovative ways to encourage seniors and those with low incomes to take part in the Gallery's programmes

Ensure future engagement by increasing by 15% the number of families and young people making visits outside of school and college, and by 10% the number of visits from those living overseas to reflect the growing international status of the Gallery

Increase the proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) UK visitors to a level consistently above 10% and towards 15%

Use further evaluation and focus group techniques to support improvements in what the Gallery offers, on site and online

Review and improve interpretation around the Collection and portraiture, extending contextual information, and ways of accessing it, at the Gallery and at a distance

Develop more work with families and young people, linking to outreach projects and community participation

Continue to develop opportunities for school and college students at the Gallery and link portraiture to studies in history, art and citizenship

Extend work with the Collection beyond the Gallery

Extend selected programmes of outreach and access work, linked to audience development and to the digital and national programmes

Develop the video-conferencing programme as a way of offering engagement to schools and classes in remote locations

Develop the National Programme with the National Trust, key partner regions and cities, finding more consistent resources to support short and long-term loans, and allowing more effective planning and linkage with the Subject Specialist Network

Work with other portrait galleries around the world and with other appropriate international partners to promote sharing knowledge, collections and exhibitions

2 To develop the Collection, creating opportunities for acquisition and commission, while improving its care and conservation.

Develop the Collection - finding resources as necessary

Explore and respond to collecting priorities for the 20th century and contemporary collections, where there are the greatest needs and the greatest opportunities, and acquire portraits from earlier centuries on a selective basis

Use detailed studies of strengths and weaknesses in particular collecting areas to inform future activity

Continue to focus the Portrait Fund on major acquisitions, growing the Fund to a sufficient level, with a target to reach £10m by 2015

Develop the programme of commissioning portraits, with new ways to link sitters to the Gallery's work, and finding more support through the Fund for New Commissions

Initiate a selective programme of transfers to other public institutions of a limited number of portraits which do not fully meet the collecting parameters of the Gallery

House and manage the Collection and its conservation to a better standard

Re-house the pictures and sculpture in store in high standard accommodation which is more accessible both to the public and to staff, preferably through cooperation with Tate but if necessary using an alternative option

Re-house the picture frame conservation studio, currently inadequately positioned, and with it if possible the picture conservation studio, providing appropriate high standard facilities for technical research and support

Ensure the provision of sufficient storage space for works on paper, the library and the archive until at least 2025

Develop *Mimsy*, the collections database, to manage the Collection most effectively

Renew and implement a policy and action plan for conservation work at the Gallery, taking account of resource and sustainability issues

3 To increase the understanding of and engagement with the Collection and the art of portraiture through outstanding research, exhibitions and displays, publishing, regional and digital programmes.

Develop the Gallery as an outstanding centre for research into British portraiture

Explore how to enhance the Heinz Archive and Library as the world centre for the study of British portraiture and related subjects

Identify the most appropriate way to reach out and realise the ambitions of the *Portrait Finder* proposal, working cooperatively with others to make the nation's portraits available online and to deepen understanding of them, linking with the Subject Specialist Network, *Understanding British Portraits*

Explore and engage in a limited number of research partnerships with other like-minded academic institutions and museums in Britain and overseas

Work with the National Gallery, Westminster City Council and appropriate partners to explore the potential for cooperation in developing shared research facilities

Enable curatorial and other Gallery staff, and external researchers, to carry out and make available research projects into aspects of British portraiture and related subjects

Establish ways to put research on a more secure basis, whether through revenue support, further three-year project funding or through longer term funding arrangements.

Research and make more information available on the collections

Make detailed catalogue information available digitally on all portraits in the Primary Collection by completing the Later Stuart and Later Victorian catalogues, placing earlier printed collection catalogues online, and cataloguing the remaining portraits

Complete the *Making Art in Tudor Britain* project and develop technical research into other portraits where linked to an understanding of portraiture and the Collection

Complete cataloguing and scanning of all priority reference collections so that they are available online

Make available online the Library and Gallery Records catalogues, and catalogue, or convert existing records, so that half these collections are available online by 2015

Develop programmes of activity which increase engagement with the collection and related themes

Renew the displays of the Collection on a rolling programme – broadly using the present architectural framework – linking to themes of current and historical interest, and promoting engagement with less visited parts of the Collection

Continue to create outstanding loan exhibitions (with national and international collaboration) offering diversity of material and wider engagement, to extend understanding and enjoyment of portraiture and related themes

Produce an outstanding programme of creative interventions, projects and activities which complements the changing displays from the Collection

Extend and promote work beyond the Gallery in publishing and digital media

Continue the high quality publishing programme, balancing exhibition catalogues and collection-related books (including more substantial studies in portraiture whether in hard copy or online) with titles reaching a wider audience

Extend and enhance digital programmes, including collection and exhibition materials, new work with young people and creative online learning opportunities, to be among the top five UK museum and gallery websites

Complete the establishment of the Subject Specialist Network, *Understanding British Portraits*, linking portrait collections of all kinds

4 To maximize the financial resources available through both public and private sector support, trading and licensing and through the effective management of the Gallery's assets and resources.

Increase both government support and independent revenue

Convince government to invest in the Gallery and increase its revenue and capital support to the Gallery's work in order for it to achieve its objectives

Continue to control costs and take opportunities to make further savings through effective procurement and critical examination of existing programmes of activity

Develop opportunities for the Trading Company to increase net returns to the Gallery through present activities - in retail, events and catering – and as appropriate through new income streams

Increase the net contribution from the commercial use of images in the collections, whether online, retail or licensed

Maintain trust and foundation support, and develop corporate contributions through creative partnerships and the best event management, close links with staff development, and the nurturing of strong relationships

Grow regular individual support towards 10,000 Members, and an increased number of Associates and Patrons, and attract more larger-scale legacies and donations

5 To develop staff as an essential resource through the extension of staff diversity, training, development and learning programmes.

Create an outstanding organisation

Fulfil the current re-structuring and continue to review departmental staffing plans in order to emphasise creativity and reflect organisational development, while also relieving pressure on staff

Develop further training, learning and professional development programmes for staff, and examine options for an upgraded internship, work experience and volunteer schemes

Achieve the goal of more than 10% of specialist and managerial staffing and 25% of general staffing being from BAME backgrounds by 2015, in order to match better the populations from which staff are recruited

6 To bring the buildings, technical and managerial infrastructure of the Gallery to the highest standards, including processes, systems, collection storage and staff accommodation.

Improve buildings, services, resources and management in order to support the programmes of activity

Review all IT systems and databases to seek a more coherent strategy, ensuring that IT systems and facilities are fit for purpose

Agree and implement a systematic approach to day-to-day management of electronic records, to digital sustainability of records, images and portraits, and to an electronic records management system for the long-term preservation of relevant electronic records

Continue to invest in the better servicing and management of the building, seeking to reduce the Gallery's energy use by 10-15% by 2015 and waste to landfill by 80%

Develop the input and capability of the Trustees to support the overview of the organisation through governance development

Improve the facilities and services at the National Portrait Gallery for public benefit

Develop additional space at the Gallery for essential public use if it becomes available through the relocation of areas used for services or staff, or on adjoining sites

Develop an enhanced Learning Centre to meet the changing needs of a wide range of audiences, reviewing the Clore Education Studio, Studio Gallery, IT Gallery and associated gallery spaces

Increase the space for major exhibitions if opportunity allows rather than curtail the ambition of exhibitions

Maintain and improve the quality of galleries and public spaces, in the short term by investment through maintenance and in the longer term by a further programme of Gallery renewal

Develop the facilities including the IT Gallery, encouraging wider engagement with portraiture, and embracing a wider range of on-site interpretation for visitors and meeting the interests of a wide range of particular audiences

Improve the welcome, support, ticketing, information and orientation for all visitors

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