

### 1) Introduction:-

The Conference is about “New Roads”, but it is perhaps worth looking at some dead ends, cul-de-sacs from the past, and using a case study to illustrate various trends and, perhaps, fashions.

The University of Glasgow has been “collecting” objects, manuscripts, etc. for well in excess of 500 years. That is what happens in ancient institutions, and particularly so where the essence of their activities is discovery. However, on his death in 1783, William Hunter, a former student, bequeathed his fantastically important collection to his *alma mater*. For him, acquiring knowledge, and communicating it to others was “the pleasure, the business, and the ambition” of his life, and he made it a condition of his bequest that the collection was made available for public access.

For that reason, the University of Glasgow has the oldest public museum in Scotland, and (we believe) the oldest combined museum and art gallery in the United Kingdom.

Today, too, the University of Glasgow’s collections are ranked third in Scotland, in terms of their national and international significance.

2.) Although open to the public for most of the next 200 years, the University has struggled with the balance between using the collections to support teaching and research, and fulfilling its commitment to public access.

Until the mid-1960’s, however, it mattered little, because with so few people entering higher education, the University was seen as an elite and remote institution, and its Museum & Art Gallery in a similar light.

Thereafter, however, we entered the era of mass higher education, and with that came new teaching methods, moving away from object-based learning, to more didactic methods. So, just as more of the community was engaging with the University, more academic departments were disengaging from the resources of the museum.

3.) Then, only in 1974, the University appointed its first Director to the Hunterian. Before that time, staff were appointed to academic departments and given honorary curatorial status within the museum. That first Director, with a background in an American university and in the museum sector, set about appointing his own team of dedicated professional museum curators and technicians, and so began a first separation from the traditional academic structure, a first “new road”.

4.) In 1990, the Director was replaced by someone who had not previously worked in the academic environment. It was at this point that the dichotomy between support for academic departments and expanding public access began to be more pronounced. It coincided also with major developments in the wider City, beyond the walls of the University. Glasgow had experienced a decline in its traditional industries over many years, and now wished to develop as a major tourism venue, and it hoped to do this not least through exploitation of its cultural and heritage resources. Simultaneously, the movement towards mass higher education meant that in excess of 50% of school leavers in Scotland were going to higher education, and quite suddenly the University (and its museum and art gallery) no longer seemed remote.

5.) With University expansion came re-organisation, and an updated role for the university's collections was sought. In 1994, the Hunterian was placed within a new Academic Services PU, together with the Library, Media and Computing Services, etc., all departments engaged directly in the support of T&R. That "new road" proved to be a cul-de-sac, and after 2 years, the Hunterian was taken out of Academic Services and located managerially within the only other non-faculty PU, Central Administration, and there within the Div of ER&M. This Division included Alumni Relations, Student Recruitment, Publicity Services, etc., all Departments with no direct Teaching and Research responsibilities. The then Director of the Hunterian was appointed Head of Division. This could be interpreted as a clear signal from senior University management that the role expected of the Hunterian was shifting from learning support to public access, AND furthermore that the Hunterian was to take the lead role in promoting the University externally.

In 1999, the logic of this strategy was reinforced when the Director was appointed to the post of Vice-Principal (Advancement) of the University, and a new Director was recruited. These two appointments were intended to reinforce the shift in the balance towards access, and the new Director was appointed from a local authority museum background.

6.) However, this year that approach too has been abandoned, and the Hunterian has been removed from ER&M. It is once again structurally co-located with the Library and Archives, but crucially independent from them. The new Director, me, reports directly to the Secretary of the University Court, and through him to the Principal.

Thus, in a very short space of time, the Hunterian moved from relative managerial independence (1807 – 1994) where the emphasis was on collaboration with academic departments, through a short period (1994 – 1996) of service support of teaching and research, to one where the emphasis had switched to support of student recruitment, enhancing the University's profile, and out-reach to the non-academic community (1996 – 2006), and finally to a position today which can only be described as uncertain. So what "new road" now lies ahead for the Hunterian, as we approach our bi-centenary?

#### 7.) The Future Place of the Hunterian in the University Structure

a) The University has an international reputation and wishes to use that to attract exceptional students and staff. It also occupies a key position within the City, where a policy of regeneration through cultural and heritage tourism is well underway. The international quality and scale of the Hunterian's collections contribute to both of these agenda. However, our physical location in buildings originally designed to accentuate the elite status of the institution, now represents an obstacle to realising our objectives, and denies to the University the opportunity to fully exploit this astonishing resource.

So, our ambition over the next few years will be to match our strategy for the collections onto the University's wider campus strategy, and to that end we are currently exploring the possibility of a new home for the Hunterian. It will be a prestigious building, matching the importance of the collections, on a site (~~provisionally already identified~~) at the edge of the campus, there providing easy public access while retaining, even enhancing, opportunities for engagement with teaching and research. There it can be partly an intellectual gateway, but hopefully more of a conduit through which knowledge is communicated in both directions, as our founder would have wished.

b) A new building will also have the potential for increasing income substantially, **and** reducing our expenditure, thereby lessening our dependence upon University finances. Not least of all, it would provide vastly improved conditions for the care of the collections, in every sense, and for visitors, students, and staff alike.

However, we have all seen enough cul-de-sacs to know that there must be no planning hiatus for our core activities, while the possibility of a new building diverts our attention. We will be exploring new partnership activities across the sector and beyond it; we will seek new means of communicating with and learning from the widest possible audiences; and of course we will be meeting our custodial responsibilities. These and many more activities are not dependent upon our ambitions for a new building.

c) But everything is not always for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and we do need to accept the reality that financial constraints and our host institution's own objectives will continue to impact upon our priorities.

Where, then, should a museum so described be located within a university's management structure? The diversity of objectives ... out-reach, student recruitment, enhanced learning, diminishing financial dependence, cross-sectoral partnerships, etc. ... cannot be matched onto any existing management structure at the University of Glasgow, at least, and an appropriate alternative has yet to be developed. My belief is that serious reflection, prompted by the need to make such decisions about the Hunterian now, can serve to kick-start a much wider re-assessment of how the University will meet its own roles. As universities and teaching methods develop, what will be the impact upon their museums and collections? Will object-based learning return to fashion, perhaps with a problem-solving dimension? Will students increasingly study remotely and appear on campus only occasionally? What, indeed, will a campus look like in 2020? For once, the need to place the Museum & Art Gallery within the host institution's management structure, may be a key part in developing such discussions, and the Hunterian will be less adapting to changes beyond our galleries and reserve collections, but initiating and helping to shape them.