

THE
HUNTERIAN



2021–25

THE HUNTERIAN STRATEGY

A changing society | A changing university | A changing university museum

A changing society, a changing university, a changing university museum



HUNTERIAN STRATEGY 2021–25 INTRODUCTION

The oldest public museum in Scotland, with collections spanning arts, sciences and humanities, The Hunterian is at the forefront of university museums around the world.

Since it opened at the University of Glasgow in 1807, The Hunterian has proved itself an invaluable academic and community resource. Enriching student and staff experience and sharing the University's teaching and research priorities, for over 200 years it has provided a platform for strategic and international collaborations, civic engagement and academic impact.

This 2021-25 Strategic Plan is conceived in a moment of global and local events that emphasise once more the necessity for more equity, justice and diversity in our society.

Many of the inequalities and prejudices in today's Western world, of which the UK and Scotland are an inextricable part, stem from a history that includes colonialism, exploitation and enslavement of people. We cannot change that past, but we can address the issues it causes in the present. We wholeheartedly support the University's reparative justice programme, for which it was named THE University of the Year in 2020.

For years to come, we commit to making The Hunterian a more meaningful place for more diverse audiences.

The emerging effects of climate change force us all to reflect on the sustainability of our practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the development of our digital engagement and helped us think in new ways. As a museum with collections which speak powerfully to environmental change, global health issues and both social and cultural transformation, The Hunterian is very well-positioned to respond imaginatively, through cross-disciplinary research, teaching and public programming.

The events of 2020-21 are driving our development in three main areas:

- Creative physical engagement with collections.
- The expansion of digital capabilities for cross-disciplinary study, attracting students and researchers from around the world.
- Blended approaches which facilitate international collaborations on significant themes, such as colonialism and climate change.

The Hunterian will focus on the distinct and important contributions it can make as a *university* museum, positioning itself as a laboratory for innovation in the sector, a dynamic partner in research and teaching and a bridge between the University and the wider society.



THE ONLINE HUNTERIAN

Physical spaces and collections enable rich interactions and unique forms of knowledge creation. Building on this, digital responses to the pandemic have highlighted new opportunities and enormous benefits from expanded participation online. Digital spaces for research, study and exploration can embrace global audiences, bringing new perspectives and enabling new constituencies to take advantage of the museum's activities and enjoy its extraordinary collections.

The Hunterian is committed to free and open access to the collections, opening up to wider use of the information and knowledge that arises from them. We will encourage the co-creation of new narratives and interpretations, working with stakeholders from the cultural heritage sector, the University, source communities and our audiences.

INNOVATING AS AN ACADEMIC AND ETHICAL MUSEUM

The Hunterian actively supports the University of Glasgow's mission 'to bring a community of world changers together'. We contribute to innovative practice and measurable academic output across all colleges, through academic partnerships, cross-disciplinary collections-based scholarship and learning and public engagement.

The Hunterian takes seriously its responsibility to present and future generations of students and staff and to contribute to the health and wellbeing of all our communities. The Hunterian commits to

developing as an ethical institution which critically reflects on the past, is relevant in the present and contributes to a more equitable future for all.

Museums play an important and highly symbolic role in representing both the past and the present. The way they do this has never been neutral: many voices are absent or under-represented. In the years to come, we will actively work to make The Hunterian a more relevant and meaningful place – for University students and staff, for Glaswegians, for Scots

and for our global visitors, in person and online. As part of this, we will critically assess our collections, opening up and sharing information in the search for wider perspectives.

We recognise that delivering sustainable change can be uncomfortable and takes time. The Hunterian team share deep-rooted values, which we will use as our driver to innovate and transform through small, powerful and decisive acts. 'Thinking in public' and sharing power and authority through meaningful partnerships, will be key.

The Hunterian will continue to develop the connections between its academic potential and public outreach. We need to fully exploit our significant physical assets and resources and to build on recent successes in digital partnerships for public engagement and research. A priority will be to deliver the urgently needed modernisation of displays and museum spaces and to develop physical and online opportunities which engage a much wider set of stakeholders.

MISSION - VISION - VALUES

MISSION

As an integral part of the University of Glasgow, The Hunterian preserves and develops its collections and expertise for innovation and engagement, to create meaning, value and relevance with academic, museum and civic communities.

VISION

The Hunterian aims to be an ethical and accessible museum organisation that engages critically with its historic legacy for the benefit of all of its stakeholders and audiences, in support of the University's effort to positively affect society.



VALUES

AMBITIOUS

- We influence our sector by experimenting and prototyping new ways of working.
- We create rich and meaningful physical and digital experiences.
- We develop sustainable practices for the benefit of future generations of practitioners and stakeholders.

TRANSPARENT

- We maintain integrity in dealing with our staff, stakeholders and audiences.
- We are honest in our examination of the past and how we represent the, sometimes uncomfortable, narratives present in our history.
- We evaluate our projects and practices critically and honestly, to learn and improve.

CURIOUS

- We welcome the knowledge, experience and perspectives of others to co-curate our collections and displays.
- We provide the infrastructure necessary to document and preserve growing dynamic datasets for university and public users.
- We pioneer and promote innovative collections-based learning, research and engagement, while learning from the best practices of others.

INCLUSIVE

- We are inclusive and equitable in our staffing, partnerships, programming and opportunities for learning and professional development.
- We collaborate and share our initiatives generously with our sector.
- We support and encourage the use and re-use of collections in new ways and by people of all backgrounds and abilities.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan outlines the direction of travel for The Hunterian over the next five years. It does so at a relatively high level of abstraction, to enable us to respond with agility to the ever-changing world around us. We will review – and where necessary adapt – the strategy with our team and stakeholders at its mid-point in 2023.

The Strategic Plan is based on an inclusive and sustainable framework that focuses on three main goals:

- To shift the common perception of museum collections from 'treasures' which passively reflect institutional history, to dynamic intellectual assets that are actively used by the academic community.
- To expand physical and digital access to the collections, stimulating the co-creation of knowledge and original research.
- To work in partnership with a wider range of communities to co-curate new narratives, opening up to reflection and debate.

Through these we seek to build an ever-growing sense of affinity and value with diverse audiences and partners – local, national and international, academic and civic.

The Strategic Plan also gives an overview of the main strands of activity for the five-year period, focusing on five, fundamentally interconnected key areas:

- **Audiences**
- **Collections**
- **Estates**
- **People**
- **Resources**

This provides the basis for more detailed operational action plans and associated targets and metrics, which will define the collective and individual outputs, contributions and resources necessary each year to achieve our shared ambitions.

STRATEGIC PLAN





AUDIENCES

The Hunterian is committing to becoming a more meaningful place for more diverse audiences.

Audience understanding and collaboration are at the heart of achieving The Hunterian's vision. Connecting our collections and expertise with the experiences, perspectives and responses of these audiences will bring new ways of working, greater relevance and integrity. We will prioritise democratising access, co-creating and co-curating, to shift perceptions and build different relationships with our audiences.

As a laboratory of innovation, operating in the public sphere, we will develop best practices in consultation, teaching, research engagement, skills development, programming and participation. This will be underpinned by a fundamental commitment to sharing power and authority in meaningful partnerships.

The Hunterian provides a vital interface between the University, its history, research and collections and a wider public. As well as an important contributor to academic teaching and research, we aim also to be a cultural and social resource that is more central to the student experience and the life of the University. A forum where research can be shared, where audiences can encounter the University and where we can inform contemporary discourse around (for example) Scottish identity and Empire.

We will:

- Audit all existing visitor and digital data to better understand existing and potential audiences – both demographics and motivations.
- Undertake relationship building, prioritising University of Glasgow audiences, wider Glasgow and Scottish audiences, as well as international audiences.
- Put a specific focus on 'curating discomfort' and widening participation, working with University and other partners.
- Work with all staff to agree audience priorities and phased audience development and engagement plans, focused on 'value' as well as 'volume'.
- Segment audiences, to target participation, programme inputs, content and communication, digital and marketing mechanisms.
- Embed digital approaches to audience understanding and communications, collections data and management, content creation and participation, with a focus on collaboration and co-creation.
- Develop academic, student and public engagement for cultural and social benefit – including skills development, inspiring creativity, changing attitudes and behaviours and supporting wellbeing.
- Embed an evaluation framework which will inform future audience engagement priorities and planning.

COLLECTIONS

The breadth and depth of The Hunterian's rich collections reflect both disciplinary range and local donor histories. These multi-faceted collections offer a hugely valuable resource to the University and many other stakeholders. Our ambition is to strengthen understanding of their potential and develop the perception of the museum as a partner in knowledge production through our collections.

The Hunterian's Collections Study Centre at Kelvin Hall will further develop as a hub for collections-centred work in the University, with state-of-the-art equipment, providing the spaces and expertise to stimulate creative research, outreach and teaching.

The Hunterian increasingly will become a bridge that connects the University to local, national and international communities. We aim to become the benchmark Scottish institution for university museum practice on research and on contemporary topics such as the legacies of colonialism and Empire and will share our expertise widely in the sector.

We will work with our stakeholders to critically reassess how collections can be developed, studied, interpreted and presented. This will help generate meaningful and rich interpretations for wider audiences as well as specialist researchers.

We have an ethical commitment to provide a transparent and open process for museum engagement and for the respectful study and return of contested material to source communities. We will provide improved access to the collections for as wide a range of stakeholders as possible, enhancing our database, our exhibition output (permanent and temporary, physical and online) and other opportunities for deep engagement and partnering.

We will:

- Facilitate online access to collections by strengthening collections management systems as part of everyday museum practice.
- Prioritise a major redevelopment of our permanent displays – to increase their relevance both to contemporary public conversations and to current academic research and teaching.
- Communicate collections strengths in a targeted way to University research and teaching partners.
- Strengthen relationships with the University's Archives and Special Collections to deliver stronger and more coherent academic contexts.
- Consolidate new and valuable partnerships with Glasgow and stakeholder communities and welcome their contributions to build understanding of the collections on their own terms.
- Develop the collections to reflect and support our aims.



PEOPLE

The dedicated, highly professional and knowledgeable people who make up The Hunterian are essential to realising all our ambitions. Their expertise transforms our understanding of the objects in the collections, working across disciplines and with our academic and civic communities. Their professionalism enables first-rate collections care, exciting exhibitions and innovative online resources. Their warmth and empathy welcomes visitors from all backgrounds and abilities and it is their proficiency that will underpin everything we do with effective internal and external services.

The Hunterian aims to develop further as an organisation that empowers individuals to maximise their contributions and removes obstacles that

hinder collective growth. The leadership team has committed to champion this development.

If the recent past has taught us anything, it is that we all need to keep developing as professionals and as people to respond to challenge and change. Whether these are intellectual (such as reinterpreting our collections) or emotional (including increasingly sensitivity to colleagues' needs and our impact on audiences and partners). We need to become as agile, digitally skilled and diverse as the world around us.

To do this we will encourage and support the professional development of individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole, in line with our values: to be ambitious, ethical, curious and inclusive.

We will:

- Identify knowledge and skills gaps (including digital capacity building) and provide access to professional learning opportunities and to opportunities for longer-term growth and development.
- Become an organisation where successes and failures can be shared as opportunities for learning and achievements celebrated.
- Increase our diversity and inclusion to better represent the world we live in, recruiting, learning from and supporting staff, volunteers, partners, source communities and audiences accordingly.
- Work creatively together and with our academic and civic audiences.
- Balance vital core work with new initiatives, supporting people to manage workloads effectively and work together across teams.
- Support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Hunterian staff.
- Improve annual planning cycles.





ESTATES

The University's significant capital investment making Kelvin Hall an innovative collections hub, has transformed what we offer our research and teaching audiences.

The Kelvin Hall project originally intended, working with civic and national partners, to expand into an integrated and equally ground-breaking new public university museum, to build strong connections between audience engagement and collections research and teaching. However, the option to deliver a major second phase of development at Kelvin Hall, to create new displays and exhibitions, is off the table for the foreseeable future.

In anticipation of that development, no significant investment has been made in the remaining Hunterian estate for a decade or more. There is now an urgent and pressing need for major capital investment in the Gilbert Scott and William Whitfield buildings, not least with a view to adequate sustainability standards.

A detailed, costed, deliverable estate investment plan will be established by autumn 2022.

This will cover:

- Completion of collections storage, care and access provision in Kelvin Hall.
- A plan for the former 'public' spaces known as the Zoology Museum and Anatomy Museum, providing multifunctional facilities and object displays, in collaboration with the University's College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences (MVLS).
- Full options appraisals to make the Gilbert Scott and William Whitfield spaces fit for purpose, including modern sustainability standards, to match the world-class collections facilities in Kelvin Hall.
- Development of appropriate public facilities for all visitors, maximising visitor flow and connecting social spaces with University estates and streetscape developments.
- Consultation with audiences and stakeholders.



RESOURCES

The Hunterian holds one of the most significant museum collections in Scotland and is one of the largest university museum collections in the UK. For its size, The Hunterian continues to achieve levels of activity and benefits beyond many of its peers. We do this by maximising the use of existing resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

However, The Hunterian's strategic ambitions and the potential of our assets can only be fully realised through long-term capital investment in our estate and digital infrastructure, matched by revenue funding for truly impactful and sustainable delivery of objectives and programmes.

Revenue funding from the University of Glasgow enables core activity and collections care and access, supported by a longstanding but vulnerable Scottish Funding Council grant. For its size, reputation and potential, The Hunterian remains one of the most underleveraged among its UK peers, in terms of both philanthropic income and its statutory and other grant revenue.

An investment step-change is required to meet the significant challenges and opportunities presented by this Strategy.

We will:

- Work with the University's Development and Alumni Office to improve external funding opportunities and increase grant-capture capability, capacity and delivery.
- Work with the University's Estates and IT Services departments on the development and implementation of plans that will ensure the long-term sustainability of our estate and digital infrastructure, to ensure its suitability for the purposes set out in this strategy.
- Work with the University's senior management team to scope and secure a long term and sustainable financial basis for The Hunterian.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART

