

THE BARBER INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE GALLERIES — 2008/9 TO 2012/13

1. Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote the study and encouragement of art for the benefit of the University of Birmingham and the wider public.

2. Strategic Vision

Our strategic vision for the next five years is to be recognised as one of the world's best University galleries: forward-looking, accessible, visitor-focused, and a centre of excellence for scholarly research and museum practice.

3. Vision Themes and Strategic Aims

A Learning Institute – we shall promote teaching and research through the delivery of scholarly exhibitions, publications and lectures in accordance with the University's mission as outlined in its Cultural and Heritage strategy.

A Caring, Conserving Institute – we shall seek to protect, conserve and develop our internationally renowned collection and to preserve our famous building.

An Accessible Institute – we shall seek to raise our public profile and to display and interpret our collections for the education and enjoyment of as wide an audience as possible.

A User Friendly Institute – we shall put our visitors at the heart of our vision and seek to provide them with improved facilities and services to meet their growing expectations.

A Partnership Institute – we shall nurture our established partnerships with departments in the University, the Friends of the Barber Institute, educational groups, galleries, funding bodies and other supporters, and seek to develop these at a regional, national and international level.

A Forward Looking Institute – we shall plan for the future needs of our collections, building and audiences, and seek to embrace new technologies and developments in museum practice.

4. Core Activities

In order to deliver the above aims, we shall focus over the next five years on the following core activities.

Collections Management – we shall continue to maintain and develop the collections. In doing so, we shall seek to make new acquisitions when the opportunity arises; to secure appropriate loans, gifts and bequests; to care for our collection through the delivery of our rolling conservation programme; to improve the storage and display of the collections and, in particular, three dimensional objects and works on paper; to improve actual and virtual access to the collections; to undertake and publish research on the collections. Current and future collection management projects include the development of a Renaissance Gallery including works of all media (paintings, sculpture, coins, etc); the reorganisation of the storage system in the Prints and Drawings Study Room; the digitisation and on-line presentation of the collections; the publication of key sections of the coin collection catalogue. We shall also endeavour to increase public opening hours for the Lady Barber Gallery.

Exhibitions Management – we shall work to deliver a year-round programme of loan and work-in-focus exhibitions. In doing so, we shall seek to broaden the range and appeal of our

exhibitions programme; to collaborate with guest curators and other experts; to develop partnerships with other museums and academic institutions; to support scholarly research and debate through exhibition publications and events; to improve knowledge transfer; to raise our public profile locally, regionally and nationally; to stimulate visits by regular and first-time attenders; to maintain visitor levels and visitor spend throughout the year. Exhibition proposals for the next five years are already well developed and include partnerships with the Fitzwilliam Museum at the University of Cambridge (Brett Portraits) and the British Museum (Cityscapes on Renaissance Coins and Medals).

Building Maintenance and Security – we shall work to maintain the condition and security of the building and its collections. In doing so, we shall seek to comply with fire prevention and health and safety legislation; to maintain and, where necessary, upgrade the existing alarm and building security systems; to review and update emergency response procedures; to monitor and remedy any building defects. Building maintenance projects currently being managed by the University Estates Office include an upgrade of the electricity supply to the building; an investigation into roof leakage problems; preparations for Phase II of the Concert Hall refurbishment.

Audience Development – we shall introduce a new emphasis on understanding, reaching and engaging our target audiences. In doing so, we shall seek to develop a comprehensive programme of audience research; to achieve deeper penetration of our core markets; to reach new audiences; to improve interpretation of the collections and the building. Audience development initiatives currently in hand include family guides for the permanent collection (supported by Birmingham NADFAS); education workshops for special schools (supported by the Eridge Trust); improved interpretation frameworks, themed trails and modernised, individual labelling throughout the building.

Visitor Services – we shall work to develop the quality and range of our visitor services and facilities. In doing so, we shall seek to improve physical access to the building; to introduce new way-finding signage and sources of visitor information; to develop and improve our catering service in consultation with the University Hospitality and Accommodation Services team; to develop and improve our gallery shop. Visitor services projects currently in development include the creation of a new, level building entrance (subject of an application to the DCMS/Wolfson Museums Improvement Fund); a building and gallery guide (funded by Renaissance in the Regions); an upgrade of current catering and retail facilities (funded by the MLA).

Fundraising – we shall invest more staff time in raising funds from external sources. In doing so, we shall seek to obtain corporate sponsorship for individual exhibitions and events; to develop individual giving and bequests; to secure funding from public bodies and grant-making trust and foundations. Funds have already been raised for the production of a building and gallery guide (see above), our internship programme (NADFAS, University of Birmingham Alumni Fund and the Friends of the Barber Institute), the Northern Lights exhibition (Friends of the Barber Institute and the Swedish Embassy) and the Matthew Boulton exhibition (PricewaterhouseCoopers). Fundraising projects currently in hand include the launch of a Patrons' Scheme in association with the University Development and Alumni Office; approaches to corporate sponsors for forthcoming exhibitions and the Patrons' Scheme; an application to the DCMS for a major grant to improve building access (see above).

Forward Planning – we shall emphasise the importance of forward planning up to and beyond 2012/13. In doing so, we shall seek to develop appropriate planning documents; to promote good general and project management practices; to address succession planning issues; to maximise future development opportunities. Forward planning initiatives currently being pursued include the development of a five-year rolling exhibition programme; the creation of an executive management steering group with members drawn from the University and the Henry Barber Trust; the creation of a cross-disciplinary management group to consider the future needs and development of the Barber Institute building; the creation of a research and development group for the eightieth anniversary; the creation of a fundraising advisory group with members drawn from the Patrons’ Scheme and the Friends of the Barber Institute. We shall also work with the History of Art department on the expansion of our interns’ programme and the development of learning and career opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Staff Development – we shall place increased emphasis on developing staff skills and management experience. In doing so, we shall seek to introduce concepts of best practice and benchmarking; to monitor and reward staff performance; to provide professional and personal development opportunities; to improve staff communications and use of information technology. These aims have already been greatly facilitated by the recent introduction of the University Staff Development Review for academic and related staff and Performance Development Review for support staff. Other staff development initiatives include museum management courses for senior staff; work placements with national museums or galleries for junior staff; staff away-days to observe and comment on the operations of other regional museums and galleries; working with the University Academic Practice and Organisational Development Unit (APOD) to develop tailored training programmes for museum staff.

Capital Projects - we shall continue to develop and deliver our programme of capital works. At present, these include Phase II of the Concert Hall refurbishment and the creation of a new, level building entrance (see above). We shall also seek to develop other capital projects, with particular emphasis on improvements to visitor facilities and services, such as the gallery shop and reception/refreshments area.

6. Key Objectives

Our key objectives for the next five years are:

- To improve audience engagement with the collections
- To improve actual and virtual access to the collections
- To improve visitor satisfaction with services and facilities
- To increase gallery attendances
- To increase income from fundraising activities
- To increase income from trading activities