

# **Advancing LGBTQ equality through cultural institutions**

**Research Centre for Museums and Galleries**

**University of Leicester**

Research Impact Report

Spring 2020

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## 2 Introduction

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### 2.1 Context

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester conducts research which explores LGBTQ histories and their presentation in museums, galleries and heritage institutions.

The RCMG has been working in this field for many years, collaborating with individuals and organisations to develop and deliver LGBTQ work through advisory groups, advocacy, mentoring and bespoke support. Key projects have included *sh[OUT]: an evaluation of the Social Justice Programme of the Gallery of Modern Art* in Glasgow in 2009-10, and the *Museums and the Transgender Tipping Point* event in February 2019. Alongside collaborative projects, Professor Sandell carried out a ten year study of international LGBTQ/Queer museum and heritage which was published in *Museums, Moralities and Human Rights* (2017).

In recent years, the focus of the RCMG's work has been *Prejudice and Pride*, a large-scale collaborative research project with the National Trust which ran from 2016-2019. The project formed part of the national commemorations to mark 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 2017. The RCMG project team included Professor Richard Sandell, artist Professor Matt Smith, Professor Jocelyn Dodd, Dr Sarah Plumb, David McAlmont and Cesare Cuzzola. The RCMG worked with key properties and staff across the National Trust to explore a series of research questions. In-depth work took place at a number of sites including Kingston Lacy, Smallhythe, Plas Newydd and Felbrigg Hall to research, design and realise creative responses to the LGBTQ histories and stories at each site. Professor Richard Sandell, along with the National Trust, worked with historian and singer-songwriter David McAlmont to create *girl.boy.child*, a research-led performance piece responding to LGBTQ histories. The RCMG conducted an in-depth evaluation and visitor study. The project culminated in a publication, *Prejudice and Pride: LGBTQ Heritage and its contemporary implications*, and a conference, *Prejudice, Pride, Place*, in May 2018.

### 2.2 Report overview

This report explores the impact of the RCMG's LGBTQ work in the museum and heritage sector since August 2013. It looks specifically at the ways in which the Centre's research has transformed thinking, practice and policy. For each of these areas, the report studies:

- the reach - the range and diversity of the individuals and organisations who have been affected by the research, and
- the significance - the extent to which the research has enriched, influenced, informed, and changed things for individuals, organisations and across the sector.

The focus is on the impact on the workforce and the organisations, rather than on the visitors and participants.

The report starts with an initial exploration of the reach of the RCMG's LGBTQ work, looking at levels of awareness and at the dissemination of the research. This is followed by three sections which explore the development of thinking, practice, and policy. There is then an overview of the impact of the research more widely across the museum and heritage sector. Throughout the report, there are *In Focus* snapshots, highlighting brief examples of relevant work. The final section of the report includes seven case studies, in which key figures across the sector share the impact of the RCMG's research on their own work and organisation.

## 3 Executive Summary

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### 3.1 Reach: Awareness of the RCMG's LGBTQ research

The RCMG's research was seen to powerfully affect individuals and organisations across the UK and internationally. Based on survey responses from 83 individuals, there was clearly awareness of the RCMG's LGBTQ work from people at all stages in their careers and across a range of settings including national, regional and local museums as well as national heritage organisations and funders. There was praise for the accessible dissemination, and evidence of secondary dissemination.

### 3.2 Developing thinking, practice and policy

#### 3.2.1 Developing thinking

Across the sector, the RCMG's work was seen to be influential in developing thinking for people and organisations at all stages in their LGBTQ practice, whether they were just starting out on this journey or were experienced in the field.

- 86% of respondents said that the RCMG had influenced them or their organisation.
- 75% of respondents said that the RCMG had informed or had an impact on their practice.

The significance of the RCMG's work in developing thinking was clear. It had **raised awareness**, helping people to keep up to date, stay connected and be inspired. The research helped 70% of respondents to **develop understanding** of LGBTQ issues in the sector. It had introduced alternative perspectives, and added breadth and depth to the work being developed. The RCMG was seen to be a driver for social change, framing LGBTQ work within a human rights context in which museums are not neutral and take an activist stance.

The RCMG's research had helped 79% of respondents **develop confidence** in this area of work. There were reports of increased confidence around programming, collecting, interpretation, delivery, creative practice, and advocacy. This was due to the RCMG's:

- **Academic rigour** which legitimised the work, giving evidence for internal and external advocacy,
- **Clear academic framework** which others could build upon, connecting theory and practice,
- Commitment to **sharing current practice** in a creative and transparent way,
- Convening power which **forged connections** between individuals and organisations, building a **supportive community** and **solidarity** for LGBTQ individuals leading the work, and
- Positioning of the work within a **wider national and international context**.

#### 3.2.2 Developing practice

The RCMG had helped 71% of respondents to do more and/or better LGBTQ activity. Respondents from a wide range of organisations in the UK and internationally reported that the RCMG had helped them to develop activity with particular impact on events, exhibitions, displays, and interpretation.

The RCMG's applied research **inspired others** to create more LGBTQ-related work and to encourage good practice. At the National Trust, the *Prejudice and Pride* project had taken a creative, **collaborative approach, challenging existing practice** and pushing the organisation forward. This project had inspired others such as Historic Royal Palaces and the National Gallery of Ireland to develop their practice. The RCMG was seen to support organisations, including the National Trust, to develop socially-engaged and relevant practice, **embedding LGBTQ work at their core** with activities such as staff networks and regular programming. The RCMG's research is grounded in practice, enabling it to offer **practical, pragmatic, and realistic advice and hands-on support** to organisations to develop their LGBTQ work and to overcome challenges. There was value to the Centre offering organisations an **external perspective**. The RCMG encouraged organisations to **foster ethical collaborations**, founded on research with participants, visitors, and communities.

### 3.2.3 Developing policy

The RCMG's research has **supported organisations to develop strategy or policy** relating to LGBTQ equality, as reported by over a third of respondents. In the UK, organisations such as the National Trust for Scotland, Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales, and the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions reported that the RCMG's work had helped them to develop policy or strategy. Internationally, this had also happened at organisations including the National Museum of Ireland, the Centre of Democracy in Australia, and the Technisches Museum Wien in Austria.

It was reported that the research had encouraged organisations to develop strategy and policy by **helping to inform content and inspire confidence** in this work. At the National Trust, the partnership with the RCMG had influenced policy development, as seen in *Everyone Welcome*, their organisational commitment to being inclusive. The RCMG was seen to have had an impact at a strategic level on national funding bodies including Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, inspiring changes in thinking and offering practical support.

### 3.3 Overview of impact on the sector

The RCMG's research had **positively impacted on the museum and heritage sector**, as reported by 96% of respondents. Sector-wide, the RCMG was seen to have helped **develop greater awareness** of LGBTQ issues and **increased confidence** in doing this work. It had supported the development of more LGBTQ narratives and programming. The RCMG was seen to have helped **build momentum** and create a **supportive environment** for growing this practice.

It was reported that the RCMG's research **helped thinking** around LGBTQ issues across the sector. The research had such a positive impact because it had enabled people to understand why this work needed to be done, providing inspiring examples. **Confidence** was increased through the research as it helped **legitimise and justify** this area of work. The Centre was a **well-established leader** in the field, inspiring and challenging others to develop meaningful work and offering **space for rigorous thinking**.

The RCMG was seen to have helped **develop practice** across the sector. The Centre's **collaborative and generous approach** to sharing knowledge and expertise was seen to benefit the whole sector. Sharing the **robust evidence** gathered through high-quality audience research, brought clarity and nuance to LGBTQ-related work. The **high-profile Prejudice and Pride** collaboration with the National Trust was seen to be a particularly significant project, **inspiring and giving confidence** to others to develop LGBTQ work, whilst providing examples of challenges and best practice. The ripple effects of this project continue with the development of a **new network of organisations** developing work around queer heritage and collections. The network will bring together the RCMG, the National Trust, English Heritage, Historic England, and Historic Royal Palaces to continue working towards the advancement of LGBTQ equality.

## 4 Research methods

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### 4.1 Approach

A mixed methods research design was used, with quantitative and qualitative approaches, resulting in a robust set of data, bringing breadth and depth to the study. The fieldwork consisted of:

- individual semi-structured in-depth telephone interviews,
- a small-scale online survey.

#### 4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Ten interviews were conducted by telephone between 31 January and 26 February 2020. A discussion guide was used to steer the research, with questions selected to suit the interviewees' engagement with the RCMG. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for report writing purposes. Interviews lasted an average of 28 minutes, ranging from 22 to 32 minutes.

The ten interviewees were selected to reflect a range of roles, organisations and engagement with the RCMG.

- Rachael Lennon, Programme Curator, National Public Programmes, National Trust
- Liz Ellis, Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight, National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Laura Bauld, Project Curator, Burrell Renaissance Project, Burrell Collection
- Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers, British Museum
- Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces
- Lisa Power, LGBTQ Historical Consultant and equality campaigner
- Armando Perla, Head of Human Rights, Montreal Holocaust Museum, Canada; International Advisor on Museums, Human Rights and Social Inclusion in the city of Medellín, Colombia; formerly Project Manager, Museum of Movements, Malmo.
- Susan Ferentinos, Public History Researcher, Writer & Consultant
- Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A; Researcher, Bridging Binaries LGBTQ+ Tours, University of Cambridge Museums; Researcher, LGBTQ+ Tours, Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd National Museum Cardiff; Project Manager, Queer Heritage and Collections Network
- Andrew McLellan, Head of Learning and Participation, Pitt Rivers Museum

#### 4.1.2 Small scale survey

An online survey was used to gather data from the museum and heritage sector between 7-25 February 2020. The main aim of this survey was to capture quantitative and qualitative data from those who were aware of the RCMG's LGBTQ work. This included those who may have been directly involved in projects and those who were aware of the research through other means such as publications, conferences, or social media.

The survey was open to all and people were encouraged to share it with others working in this field. It was circulated on social media, and to individual and organisational contacts.

In total, there were 114 respondents to the digital survey.

- **73%** (83 people) were aware of the RCMG's research into LGBTQ work in the museum and heritage sector,
- **24%** (27 people) were not aware of this research and **3%** (4 people) were unsure

The report focuses only on the responses from people who were aware of the RCMG's research. This gives a sample of 83 respondents.

Four respondents were unsure if they had heard of the RCMG's LGBTQ work. Their broader thoughts on the wider sector have been considered, but to ensure that the data is robust, their responses have not been included in any other areas or within any statistics.

#### 4.1.3 Analysis

Data from the interviews and survey were collated and categorised according to the aims of the research project. Patterns and themes were drawn out, as well as individual remarks, to illustrate responses from respondents.

#### 4.1.4 Language

- Quotes are given verbatim in the report, with occasional grammatical tweaks to facilitate reading in this context.
- The acronym LGBTQ is used throughout the report, unless another is specifically used by the respondent (e.g. LGBT or LGBTQ+).
- The term 'RCMG's work' refers specifically to LGBTQ-related research, not to the wider work of the RCMG.

## 4.2 Scope and limitations

The report focuses on the impact which has occurred since 1 August 2013 until January/February 2020 when the fieldwork was conducted. The impact relates specifically to underpinning research which was undertaken by the RCMG from 2000 to February 2020.

The research set out to identify the impact, and as such, the survey sample reflects a range of individuals and organisations who are active in this field, with responses coming from across the sector.

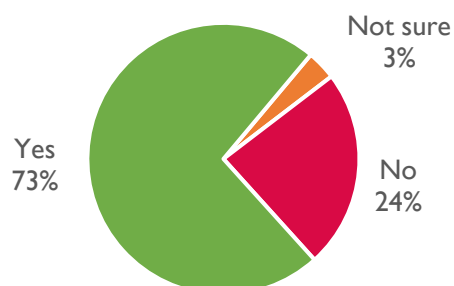
Respondents had the option not to disclose their name / job title / organisation or for this information to be withheld from the report. Respondents were asked to identify themselves with the details of the job title / organisation which was most associated with their RCMG engagement, rather than their current role, if it was more relevant.

## 5 Reach: Awareness of the RCMG's LGBTQ research

### 5.1 Awareness of the RCMG's LGBTQ research

In total, there were 114 respondents to the digital survey. Of these respondents, **73% (83 people)** were **aware of the RCMG's research into LGBTQ work in the museum**. This report uses the data gathered from this sample of 83 people who were aware of the RCMG's work.

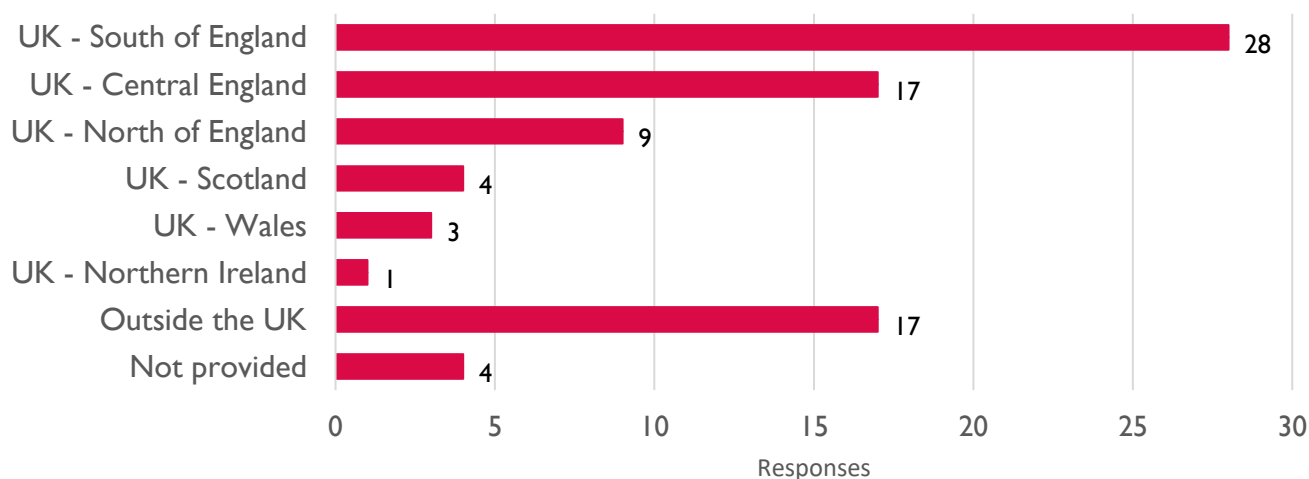
Q: Are you aware of the RCMG's research into LGBTQ work in museums and heritage sector?  
114 responses



#### 5.1.1 Location

This small survey provides evidence that there is national and international awareness of the RCMG's LGBTQ research. There were a high number of respondents from the south of England, although some of them work regionally or nationally, but given the nature of the sampling, no particular conclusions can be drawn from this.

Q: Where are you based?  
83 responses



International survey responses were received from practitioners and policy makers working in the following countries:

- Europe: Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Netherlands,
- USA,
- Australia,
- Taiwan.



## 5.1.2 Organisation and role

The survey showed that there is awareness of the RCMG's LGBTQ research across a variety of organisations, with responses from people in: local, regional, national and university museums and galleries; heritages sites; and universities; as well as a funder, a festival, and professional membership bodies. There were 15 respondents (18%) who worked at the National Trust.

The individuals who responded reflected a range of specialisms, including front of house, curatorial, learning and marketing, and had a range of experience from students and early career professionals to senior leadership and trustees. The survey showed that there is also awareness amongst individuals in independent roles such as creative practitioners and researchers.

## 5.2 Dissemination

### 5.2.1 Accessibility and relevance

The extent and diversity of the RCMG's reach was attributed in part to their generosity and open approach. They were seen to share their findings widely and in accessible ways. A key way in which the research was disseminated was through directly working with collaborative research partners such as the National Trust. This work was then shared more widely, through mechanisms and channels such as:

- easy-to-read printed and downloadable publications,
- engaging conferences and events,
- memorable YouTube videos,
- press coverage, and
- social media.

*RCMG is that fabulous thing, a generous and collegiate group who are willing to share and learn alongside. I have drawn on publications and learn by watching while working with RCMG.*

Professor Matt Smith, Professor of Craft: Ceramics and Glass, Konstfack - University of Arts, Crafts and Design, Sweden

*It is really important to share best practice across the sector so that people aren't reinventing the wheel. [...] I think the RCMG can really provide that, whether it's through things they publish as an instantly downloadable PDF on their website, or conferences so people can meet. It's fabulous.*

Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

*My whole experience and understanding of LGBTQ issues and challenges today has been transformed by the work of RCMG's team, by their approach and generosity in sharing their processes and findings.*

Julie Howell, Socially Engaged Artist and Experience Designer

*I first came across RCMG when studying for my MA in arts policy and found its work very interesting. I have subsequently seen how it is having an impact as a result of its research, but also events that it puts on.*

Ben McKnight, Press & PR Director, Manchester International Festival

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator at the V&A, Freelance Heritage Researcher, Project Manager of the Queer Heritage and Collections Network, explained that whilst the work is 'underpinned by a wealth of academic research and background [...] it feels as if it's within grasp and is accessible.' He described how one of the films produced for the National Trust project included a particularly 'striking moment' with same-sex parents talking about the experience of visiting the installation at Kingston Lacy with their child. For Vo, the film showed that the significance of that installation was 'obviously embedded in the thoughts of the parents now.'

Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers at the British Museum attended the *Prejudice, Pride, Place* conference, and felt that it was 'one of the best conferences' he'd been to for a long time. Unusually for an academic conference, there was a lot of practical learning, which could be applied back

at the museum. The RCMG's successful collaborations were seen to bring theory and practice together. The learning from these projects was then shared in an open and honest way, maximising the benefits for all.

*There was a lot to take away that you could practically apply in a workplace, and I think that's not always the case with university based research. I think it's got a really strong balance between the theory, research, research-based practice and collaboration with people who are actually engaged with the nitty-gritty of how do we do this on the ground, and then sharing all of that with the sector. That conference was great because it had those practical case studies, and everyone who spoke was being really honest about what had worked, what the challenges had been. [...] I think that was quite refreshing.*

Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers, British Museum

### 5.2.2 Secondary dissemination

Beyond the RCMG's own dissemination, there is evidence of a ripple effect as others share the research alongside their own findings through conferences, talks, courses and with colleagues and volunteers.

There was evidence that those people who were directly involved in the RCMG's action research shared their own learning internally and externally. For example, Annabel Smith, Head of Volunteering and Participation Development at the National Trust, explained that she had shared the learning about how volunteers had experienced *Prejudice and Pride*, talking about what had gone well, lessons learnt and what could be improved in the future. Internally, she had shared the learning with at least 100 colleagues and the project had also helped to shape specific training resources such as *Exploring Everyone Welcome with Volunteers* which had been downloaded 320 times. Annabel had talked about the project externally including:

- The Association of Volunteer Managers annual conference - approx. 100 people
- CASS Business School students (MA in Charity Effectiveness) - approx. 120 people
- Convestival workshops - 100 people

Beyond the National Trust, other people reported that they had discussed the RCMG's research in papers at these events:

- *Ruling Sexualities, Gender, Sexuality and the Crown* conference in 2018, organised by Historic Royal Palaces with University of Winchester Royal Studies Network, and associated special issue of the Royal Studies Journal published December 2019
- *Queer Textures of the Past* session, Leeds Medieval Symposium, 2019

There were many examples of respondents sharing the RCMG's research internally and externally to help develop understanding, and to support and advocate for LGBTQ work.

*I have personally cited the research internally, in internal meetings, when I'm advocating for this work. I have quoted it at several academic conferences and in academic publications. I've used it in public lectures when I'm talking to the general public or members of our membership scheme at Historic Royal Palaces when I'm talking about LGBTQ work and why I do it. It has been so useful and so transformative actually to aid my understanding and to help other people understand why this work is important.*

Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

*We had Richard Sandell over as a keynote speaker on an international Queering the Collections conference in Amsterdam, March 2015, the proceedings of which I subsequently published, to great acclaim.*

Dr Riemer Knoop, Professor Emeritus, Reinwardt Academy - Amsterdam University of the Arts & Owner, Gordion Cultureel Advies, Netherlands

*RCMG's work has been hugely valuable as it has added profile and weight to LGBTQ issues in museums and I know that many have found it useful to reference the research internally to colleagues and Boards who may have less awareness and understanding.*

Maggie Appleton, CEO, RAF Museum

*I have included this subject in my Master course and used RCMG's publications and Prof. Richard Sandell's book as reading material for my students. It was extremely helpful in terms of increasing students' understanding around LGBTQ+ and stimulating the discussion in the class.*

Wen-Ling Lin, Assistant Professor, Graduate Institute of Museum Studies, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan

Practitioners appreciated being able to share the research directly with those who may not have an academic background. This was due to both the accessible dissemination and the content.

*I do training with volunteers. [...] The way that [the research is] presented to the general public is the really important thing. It means that I can bring in volunteers who don't necessarily have an academic background, and say to them, 'What you see is important and your lived experience is equal to that of a curator's full academic background research. These two things can stand together, side-by-side.*

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A, and Freelance Heritage Researcher

## 5.3 In focus

### 5.3.1 Secondary Dissemination

Nicole Moolhuijsen, Head of Visitors Experience, We Exhibit, Italy, and Researcher, IHLIA LGBT, Netherlands, ICOM

#### What happened?

*I gave a presentation on LGBTQ interpretation in museums at the international training school 'museums and stereotypes' (Italy, 2018). As participants were from diverse countries/continents questions and critical observations reflected their cultural background. [...] Their diverse cultural background matched diverse expectations and prior knowledge in relation to the topic. Later I developed research with IHLIA (2019, The Netherlands) where this type of work is integrated with wider changes in the sector. Here my research is integrated with practices that are also supported by public funding and wider politics. Between 2019/20 I published a series of short articles for an Italian Magazine (Artribune) on museum work in connection to gender and sexuality activism.*

#### What was the impact?

- *The staff presentation was attended by roughly 30 staff members from diverse organisations in the world (mostly Europe).*
- *The articles for the Italian magazine received good coverage (an average of 200 likes/shares for each of the five articles). They were shared in various social media groups and comments reported interest for the issue.*
- *Increasingly social media coverage and invitations to conferences. Specifically, an engagement within ICOM Italy working group on the International Museum Day which will dedicate attention to LGBTQ and gender issues.*

#### How did the RCMG's research help?

- *In providing scientific information and academic literature on LGBTQ issues,*
- *It works as a repository of case studies which are very useful,*
- *Providing research not only into the practices (meaning their characteristics...) but also audience evaluation and other more rounded aspects,*
- *Showing how LGBTQ work is gaining relevance and importance in the field.*

*It has helped me considering issues more in depth and in connection to audience responses to LGBTQ practices and their management. It has also helped me to set this interest within a wider discourse on museum activism and ethically engaged work.*

## 6 Developing thinking

### 6.1 Reach

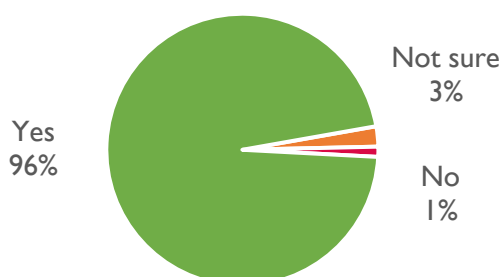
This section explores the range and diversity of the individuals and organisations whose thinking has been affected by the RCMG's research.

#### 6.1.1 Developing awareness, interest, understanding and confidence

The majority of respondents reported that, since August 2013, they had developed their thinking or activity around LGBTQ-related work. Those who were aware of the RCMG's LGBTQ research, felt that it had been influential, and had informed/impacted on their practice.

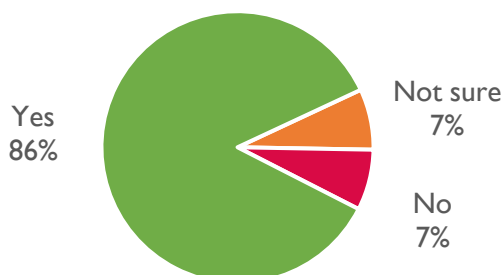
- **96%** said that they **had developed their thinking or activity** around LGBTQ-related work since August 2013.

Q: Since August 2013, have you developed your thinking or activity around LGBTQ related work?  
83 responses



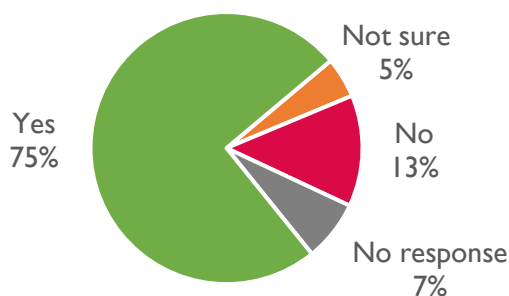
- **86%** of respondents stated that the RCMG's LGBTQ research had **had an influence** on themselves or on their organisation(s).

Q: Do you think that the RCMG's research on LGBTQ issues has had any influence on you or your organisation(s)?  
83 responses



- **75%** of respondents said that the RCMG's LGBTQ-related work **had informed or had an impact on their practice** in some way.

Q: Has the RCMG's LGBTQ related work informed or had an impact on your practice in any way?  
83 responses



The RCMG's research was seen to have helped people to develop awareness, interest and understanding around LGBTQ issues. The most common area of impact for respondents was in developing confidence in their LGBTQ work.

Has the RCMG's research helped you to develop any of the following:	%
More <b>confidence</b> in your LGBTQ work	79
A better <b>understanding</b> of LGBTQ issues	70
A greater <b>awareness</b> of LGBTQ issues	62
A greater <b>interest</b> in LGBTQ issues	53
76 responses	

The research was seen to have benefited a range of organisations who were at different stages in their engagement with LGBTQ issues and their own practice.

Amongst the National Trust respondents, there was evidence that the research had helped many to develop their thinking around LGBTQ work and related issues. Tom Freshwater, Head of Public Programmes at the National Trust, led the partnership with the RCMG which had informed the *Prejudice and Pride* programme. He explained that the project had helped them to develop awareness, interest, understanding and confidence in LGBTQ issues, and that the 'impacts across these four areas are felt today in the organisation.' His colleague Nino Strachey, Head of Research, explained that the work had been 'transformational' for her personal practice, and more widely across the organisation.

*During and beyond Sutton House Queered (in 2017) Richard's moral support, experience and insights were essential to my personal and professional ability to proceed and for Sutton House and the organisation to develop understanding and practice. The involvement of the RCMG was a necessity for myself (and the Trust) to develop understanding, awareness, interest and confidence and, at the same time, created some unforgettable, life-changing moments of joy!*  
Christopher Cleeve, Operations Manager, National Trust

*[The RCMG's] work on Prejudice and Pride brought greater awareness of LGBTQ stories and issues into the Trust and this programme, and their subsequent work with the current Everyone Welcome programme, has increased the confidence and understanding of properties.*  
Hannah Burton, Everyone Welcome Programme Officer, National Trust

*From my perspective the RCMG's work has been crucial in progressing the National Trust's understanding of LGBTQ issues- and in turn has impacted on individuals and properties who were already working on those areas, and given us/them further permission and support to pursue this further and on a bigger scale.*  
Dr Sean Curran, Community Learning Manager, National Trust

Organisations at an earlier stage in their inclusion and diversity work also learnt lessons from the RCMG's LGBTQ work. For David Hopes, Head of Collections & Interiors at The National Trust for Scotland, the *Prejudice and Pride* research is particularly relevant and has helped develop awareness, interest, understanding and confidence:

*The research around Prejudice and Pride has given my own organisation greater surety in charting a course and has opened up the interpretive possibilities at our properties. We have also taken on board operational lessons from this programme and encouragement from its outcomes.*

The Centre's work was seen to have had an impact on academics and creative practitioners in the UK and abroad.

*I have used RCMG's research both to develop and reflect on my creative practice - leading to what I believe are richer, deeper and more meaningful installations.*

Tom Butler, Associate Lecturer and Tutor, Central Saint Martins / University of the Arts, London & LGBTQ+ Tour Guide, V&A Museum

*RCMG's research strengthens our understanding of LGBTQ+ issues in the culture sector. We are more confident that we are studying the LGBTQ+ experience in meaningful ways since reading the findings and work of the RCMG. Having access to the work of RCMG, we are inspired and empowered to study the LGBTQ+ experience within our museums and cultural organizations.*

Laura-Edythe Coleman, Program Director, Arts Administration & Museum Leadership, Drexel University, USA

## 6.2 Significance

This section looks at the extent to which developments in thinking, resulting from the RCMG's research, have enriched, influenced, informed and changed things for individuals and organisations.

### 6.2.1 Awareness of LGBTQ issues

The RCMG's work was seen to have raised awareness of LGBTQ issues in a range of ways. For those who were already involved in this area of work, the research allowed them to keep up to date, connected and inspired by the most recent developments in the field.

*It's helped me keep up with current thinking on representation and language, developing ethics on how we identify those from the past. In particular, the exhibition with the nooses moved me deeply.*

Jon Sleight, Learning Officer and Curator, Freelance Arts Educator

*At London Metropolitan Archives an extended programme of work was in place but part of that work was to stay tuned in to new ideas and research coming out of other institutions. This strengthened the offer at LMA and the quality of the experience for all.*

Jan Pimblett, Principal Development Officer (retired), London Metropolitan Archives

The awareness was raised in various ways including press and social media. The *Prejudice and Pride* project had generated significant press coverage which was seen to bring awareness of the LGBTQ work to people who were not actively engaged in LGBTQ work. One person reported that, so far, they had only engaged with the research and the issues it explores through social media, however they now intended to develop this further through reading the reports.

*The controversy significantly raised awareness of LGBTQ social justice work in heritage beyond the activist circles.*

Anonymous

For a few respondents, the research was significant as it had introduced them to LGBTQ issues in the sector for the very first time.

*I definitely did not think about needing to represent LGBTQ people until the work of RCMG.*

Anonymous

It was noted that the RCMG's work was part of a wider shift in the sector with greater awareness of LGBTQ work as it became increasingly visible, accepted and valued in museums and galleries. Anniversaries, such as the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales, played an important part in raising awareness of LGBTQ issues across the sector. The annual LGBTQ history month was seen to be increasingly popular with rainbow flags being flown over museums, and a strong social media presence. For organisations such as Historic Royal Palaces, LGBTQ work was now seen to be a 'corporate priority'.

*About a decade or so ago, when I was beginning to do LGBT work in my career, it felt more like a guerrilla operation, trying to get it in wherever we could. Now there's a really wide acceptance that it's important, it's necessary and that it's also very successful as well.*

Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

*I'd say it's been a huge change over the last five years. There's been an exponential increase in the amount of projects and visibility and conversation in the sector. The nature of [Prejudice and Pride] is something people would not have expected from the National Trust, and I think that type of work and the profile of that work, gives lots of other people in the sector confidence that it is possible to change institutions and so on. [...] It just seems to be expanding year on year.*

Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers, British Museum

## 6.2.2 Interest in LGBTQ issues

Over 50% of respondents who were aware of the RCMG's work in this field, felt that it had helped them to develop interest in LGBTQ issues.

*I have been aware of LGBTQ issues in a very general way for some time but RCMG's work has given the issues more of a platform in the sector. And for me personally has led to a greater interest and probably more confidence in discussing the issues.*

Hajra Williams, Researcher, University of Brighton

## 6.2.3 Understanding of LGBTQ issues

### Adding breadth and depth

People felt that the research had added breadth and depth to their understanding of LGBTQ issues. As one respondent explained, the research provided a 'deeper dive into hidden histories and [...] a greater understanding of the breadth of these issues.'. The RCMG was also seen to bring new perspectives by bringing visitor responses to the fore. This improved understanding of LGBTQ issues was said to help inform and inspire new work.

*[The RCMG's] publication of serious substantial analysis of LGBTQ museum practice increased my knowledge of the range and depth of this practice and the stance of the National Trust re Prejudice and Pride was very significant.*

Anonymous

*Reading more about the research done by RCMG has really helped me understand LGBTQ issues and how as a museum professional I can do more. The range of exciting and innovative projects that they have supported has given me ideas about projects and opportunities to explore.*

Holly Franklin-Trubshawe, Curatorial Assistant

*RCMG's research has helped myself and my organisation develop an understanding of the considerations required in making LGBTQ+ voices and narratives visible within a museum.*

Anonymous

*RCMG's commitment in researching LGBTQ issue has been very encouraging in our understanding of this issue and help to improve our approach to it.*

Anonymous

### Alternative perspectives – museums are not neutral

People responded well to the way in which the RCMG's research framed LGBTQ work within a context of activism and human rights. For some, this was a new perspective giving them an alternative way to think about collections, representation and the way in which museums tell history.



*[The RCMG] pointed the way how to stay out of identity politics and, instead, turn to inclusion and human rights perspectives.*

Dr Riemer Knoop, Professor Emeritus, Reinwardt Academy - Amsterdam University of the Arts & Owner, Gordion Cultureel Advies, Netherlands

*Providing a new lens through which to consider representation in history and in collections.*

Ben McKnight, Press & PR Director, Manchester International Festival

For Dan Vo, working with the RCMG has helped to 'solidify' his practice, exploring the range of practical ways in which museums can take a more activist stance.

*I think having it thought through as different forms of activism has been really helpful. Some of it could be quite subtle, for example, in the way that we collect and the way that we notate and digitise the collection database. Some of it is a bit more active, with the things we do, like marching at Prides.*

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A, and Freelance Heritage Researcher

Andrew McLellan, Head of Learning and Participation, at the Pitt Rivers Museum, explained how the RCMG had changed his thinking from seeing museums as neutral spaces to being more activist institutions. McLellan had heard Richard Sandell give a paper entitled *Telling Stories in Divided Times* at *The museum is not neutral* conference organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum, and engaged with him as part of the *Beyond the Binary* project. He felt that the RCMG's LGBTQ work played a really key part in the wider movement which was exploring shifting power structures in the museum sector. The Pitt Rivers Museum is currently addressing issues of decolonisation as a key part of its strategic plan. This included exploring issues of British colonialism, as well as issues around gender and sexuality. Changes are being made to the museum's database to look at which voices are represented and how they are included within the hierarchy of information.

*When I first came into museums, I imagined that museums were a neutral space, that there weren't really those opinions. A museum is not neutral. We're working with some non-binary first nations artists who are putting work into our exhibition. It's about recording people's stories, and once those very personal stories are recorded, they should fit equally alongside the curatorial information, which is just as important but reflects a different kind of proof. I think Richard, but also a lot of other people within museums, is trying to get traditional curators to recognise that there isn't one objective truth or one objective story around objects, that actually there is a validity to many different stories.*

Leading LGBTQ Public Historian in the USA, Susan Ferentinos, had been influenced by the RCMG's research on the activist museum, particularly within the context of human rights and LGBTQ representation. She explained that, in her review of *Museums Moralities and Human Rights* two years ago, she had not been convinced by Richard's alternative perspective, and had felt that there was a benefit to 'the old school approach' of museums stepping back and 'not going full throttle into the fray.' However, as the conversation has continued across the sector, her perspective has now changed, something which she attributes directly to Richard Sandell.

*The book was talking about museums engaging with current events and politics within the context of human rights and LGBTQ representation. I was struggling a little bit generally with the conversation. I wasn't completely convinced by Richard's argument, but it was the best argument I've seen so far in support of political engagement in museums. And in the years since I wrote that review, I find myself being much more open to the potential of that sort of approach for museums and really seeing it as this amazing potential of museums, where I was originally resistant to the idea. I feel like part of my process of deciding how I feel about it and the change in my thinking personally is as a result of how Richard laid out the argument.*

## Working with other marginalised groups

The raised awareness and confidence resulting from the LGBTQ work was seen to inspire people to develop practice around inclusive work with other marginalised groups. Whilst there were a small number of other organisations working in this area, the RCMG's LGBTQ work was said to be important. It was seen to be distinctive as it considered underrepresentation more broadly across multiple groups and framed this within a human rights context.

*[The RCMG] is one of few voices and it's not a well populated field at this time. Having multiple underrepresented communities in the conversation, and in the same conversation, is innovative, as is the framework of human rights and talking about this in those terms. [...] Richard Sandell is one of the few people who is writing in any depth about these issues of inclusivity and museums, particularly with sexual and gender minorities, and so his work has been very influential in the field. His work with disabled visitors has also been influential. Richard's work is a rare exception. [...]*

*I would say it has been very impactful and very personally useful for me, to get that different perspective and another person's ideas, but also to check myself and my own ideas.*

Susan Ferentinos, Public History Researcher, Writer & Consultant

*[The RCMG's work] reminds us of the social interaction between the well-to-do and everyone else, because the two are never separated, towns built up around these houses. Often, I think the stories of those who were downstairs can be neglected in favour of stories from those who lived upstairs. I think Richard's work has helped revision some of that.*

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A, and Freelance Heritage Researcher

*Prejudice and Pride marked the beginning of a sea change for the National Trust that has fed into our activities for LGBTQ audiences, but also much more widely into our inclusive histories work.*

John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Culture and Engagement, National Trust

*The Prejudice and Pride programme was the catalyst that started the conversation around LGBTQ+ issues and stories, which may have gone on to become a catalyst for wider inclusion work within the National Trust.*

Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager and Co-Chair of the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network, National Trust

### 6.2.4 Confidence in LGBTQ work

The RCMG's LGBTQ research is seen to increase the confidence of people working in this field. 79% of respondents who were aware of the RCMG's research felt that it had helped to develop confidence in their own LGBTQ work. An increase in confidence was reported for LGBTQ-related:

- Programming,
- Collecting,
- Interpretation,
- Delivery,
- Creative practice,
- Advocacy.

Respondents from the National Trust reported increased confidence in delivering LGBTQ work both at an individual and institutional level.

*[The] RCMG have been the National Trust's key partner in exploring LGBTQ issues and exploring LGBTQ stories. Their expertise has given the National Trust the confidence we needed to approach these histories sensitively but confidently. Prejudice and Pride marked a pivotal point in the Trust's work with LGBTQ issues. From that has come a blossoming in our engagement - from participating in Pride across the country to supporting a staff LGBTQ network.*

John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Culture and Engagement, National Trust

*As an organisation we are more confident in developing programming for our visitors on our stories concerning LGBTQ.*

Tim Turner, General Manager, National Trust

*Working with [the] RCMG gave colleagues - and the organisation - confidence to talk about LGBTQ stories at our properties with pride and sensitivity. It helped us to become a more welcoming place by diversifying our storytelling themes and broadening our relevance to more people.*

Kate Bethune, Regional Curator, National Trust

*It gave us the confidence and the support to be sure footed in what we were doing. There was some excellent research which tied in other properties and as a team we are still very proud of our contribution and to our ongoing commitment to exploring diversity and to relating to all our visitors.*

Susannah Mayor, Senior House Steward, National Trust

Beyond the National Trust, respondents gave examples of the RCMG's research giving them the confidence to develop new practice.

*[The RCMG] has helped encourage me to do more in this field, so while it hasn't directly led to events or exhibitions, it has given me general confidence, such as hosting work of LGBTQ classified adverts at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern. It helped reassure me that this work is important and has an audience.*

Vicky Iglkowski-Broad, Principal Records Specialist - Diverse Histories, The National Archives

At the RAF Museum, the RCMG's work was seen to support the development of their work which included representing LGBTQ individuals in new permanent displays, in online storytelling, in social media and in their talks programme. The museum reported that 540,000 people visited the new permanent exhibitions in London in 2018 which featured RAF LGBTQ stories, and that their staff had marched at London Pride.

*The confidence given to us and other museums by RCMG's fabulous work has been hugely influential and supportive.*

Maggie Appleton, CEO, RAF Museum

At Newstead Abbey, they are looking at the language used to discuss sexuality as part of the ongoing reinterpretation of the house and the rainbow flag was raised. Curator Simon Brown reported that anecdotal evidence from visitors and staff has been 'overwhelmingly positive'.

*"The simple act of raising the flag has been a very good first step to bringing our staff and volunteers with us in the process of change. We know we can be bolder in our approach in the future, as they have already seen the benefits. [The RCMG's work] gave us the confidence to try!"*

Simon Brown, Curator, Newstead Abbey, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

### Academic rigour legitimises the work

The very existence of the RCMG's proactive, visible, and robust LGBTQ research was seen to legitimise the work which, in turn, inspired confidence. Having an internationally recognised academic institution produce and share this work gives people the evidence they need to promote their own work. The research enables people to put pressure on and advocate for their work both internally and externally to their organisations. This impact was reported by respondents across the world, from a range of regional and national institutions.

As one anonymous respondent explained, 'being able to refer to research makes it easier to advocate for change in traditional environments.' In another example, Pierrette Squires, Conservation & Collections Officer at Bolton Museum, had connected with the RCMG by reading research papers and talking with Richard Sandell, and felt that 'having large well known organisations doing visible projects

has made it easier to argue for similar inclusion work.’ The RCMG case studies were then ‘used as evidence when advocating for inclusive events.’ This had supported the development of their LGBTQ work which included:

- adding an LGBTQ status flag to their database,
- hosting the *Desire, Love, Identity* exhibition attended by 23,000 visitors,
- being an *OUTing the Past* hub venue, and hosting regular inclusive events with over 750 attendees,
- active ongoing engagement with the LGBTQ community.

*Knowing there is a pressure coming from institutions like yours helps in pushing internally in our organisation.*

Philip Newton, Communities Engagement Researcher, York Museums Trust

*One of the things that’s helpful for the curatorial mindset is knowing that there’s some form of academic research backing this up. It’s a foundation that was so crucial to me, because I don’t think people would have taken it on board otherwise. This isn’t just something that I’m interested in, it is something that other institutions are doing. We need to be at the forefront of this, and the Centre throws weight to that, which showed them why it’s important.*

Laura Bauld, Project Curator, Burrell Renaissance Project, Glasgow Museums

*Knowing that there is work being carried out by professionals and organisations that have an internationally renowned reputation has given me confidence to push forward with my own work in museums, and has also helped me to justify my work, its aims and objectives, to colleagues for whom LGBTIQ+ lives, issues, histories appear to be outside the purview of the museum. The work the RCMG and its members has carried out gives credence to LGBTIQ+ research and activities in museums: it has firmly placed LGBTIQ+ issues and queer practice on the agenda amongst academic museologists and museum practitioners. The RCMG, and in particular, the work of Richard Sandell, has been my go to whenever I introduce colleagues to the area of LGBTIQ+ and in museums.*

Dr Nikki Sullivan, Manager, Centre of Democracy, History Trust of South Australia

*With the move within primary schools of teaching about relationships being compulsory from September, some schools will choose to teach about same sex relationships and some schools will choose not to. We’ve got a real opportunity to affect our local schools and empower teachers to teach about same sex relationships, but [my colleague’s] really scared about doing that. But I guess the more it’s out there, and especially somewhere like Leicester, where people are looking at what you’re doing, then that enables her to think, “I’m going to do this.” Anything which brings those stories to the fore helps to give people a green light to move forward so I do think it has an effect.*

Andrew McLellan, Head of Learning and Participation, Pitt Rivers Museum

### Building upon a framework of academic research

Having an academic framework gave people confidence and supported their creativity. For example, Jon Sleight felt that his work on the *Coming Out* exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was supported by the RCMG’s research. He reported that the exhibition attracted over 30,000 visitors, had a positive impact on the lives of the communities who participated, and helped develop relationships and industry recognition.

*[The RCMG] provided an intellectual framework to experiment upon. During the Coming Out exhibition the pool of learning supported a number of creative decisions I made - and more holistically made me as a professional feel braver and less alone.*

Jon Sleight, Learning Officer and Curator, Freelance Arts Educator

*The work, undertaken to the highest academic standards, with good evidence and rich data, has been a vital tool to provide gravitas and integrity and weight to organisations’ decision-making as to whether they initiate LGBTQ work and then how to proceed with it. At a time when heritage and visitor economy*

*organisations are concerned with the increasing access to their sites and collections, the work of RCMG has been invaluable in supporting the conviction that heritage organisations, in particular, should tell the stories of their people, places and collections honestly, authentically and with colour and conviction.*

Bernard Donoghue, Director, Association of Leading Visitor Attractions

*The RCMG provided a clear, logical framework for why exploring (often hidden) LGBTQ lives today and in the past is so important. This made it much easier to communicate and engage others who otherwise might have been reluctant. Being able to develop practice which is grounded in respected research is hugely valuable, especially when exploring LGBTQ histories (which are sometimes viewed by some people as unwanted or unwelcome).*

Annabel Smith, Head of Volunteering and Participation Development, National Trust

*Scholarship is a strange thing because your approach and your ideas need to be your own, but they need to be legitimised by being part of a larger conversation, so a benefit of Richard's work is that it has legitimised my own work.*

Susan Ferentinos, Public History Researcher, Writer & Consultant

### Sharing current practice

The RCMG's work demonstrates the potential scope of LGBTQ work in the sector, from contemporary collecting to creative interventions. Seeing the work which has happened elsewhere and having the opportunity to learn from their struggles and successes has given others the confidence to develop their own practice.

*It made me more confident in what I knew was possible in terms of programming around LGBT+ history.*

Kate Drinane, Tours Administrator, National Gallery of Ireland

*I've always been interested in contemporary collecting and working to ensure the broadest range of people possible can see themselves in museums. The ways in which RCMG's research highlighted the importance of and exciting ways to explore LGBTQ history made me more confident in actively collecting and talking about LGBTQ stories too.*

Arran Rees, Doctoral Researcher and Seminar Tutor, University of Leeds; formerly Collections Curator, Museum of Cardiff (Cardiff Story); Collections Information and Systems Manager, V&A

*RCMG's work with David McAlmont encouraged a more bold and sophisticated approach to my own creative practices related to my gay male identity, in photography and crafts.*

Anonymous

*We have started to develop ways of telling the story of the very strong LGBTQ connections with our site. RCMG's work has shown us how to navigate the potential problems and maximise the opportunities.*

Simon Brown, Curator, Newstead Abbey, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

*RCMG research provides close and latest perspectives from LGBTQ community and disabled people which enlarge mutual understanding among different cultures and countries.*

Dr. Ching-yueh Hsieh, Indigenous Undergraduate Program, National Chi-Nan University, Taiwan

Those developing LGBTQ work in other organisations found it particularly useful to see the challenges faced by the RCMG's projects. Being transparent about difficult moments and the way in which they were tackled gave others confidence to develop their own work. The negative press articles sparked by the *Prejudice and Pride* project gave others the opportunity to discuss the issues and to consider 'worst-case scenario', allowing them to explore how their own organisation could withstand such challenges and explore ways in which they could mitigate potential problems. Dan Vo, who sits on the steering group for the *Bridging the Binary* project, felt seeing this example had led to projects introducing more training for staff, including front of house and volunteers:

*I think being able to show the Daily Mail headline, [saying] that's the worst thing that can happen and thinking if you feel you could brave that, then this project should go ahead. The idea that there may be bad press, but it is something that can be shouldered and something that can be mitigated. One of the things that has been worked into the [Beyond Binary] system, and into every other project that I've worked on, is making sure that front of house and all staff are briefed and workshopped so they take a sense of ownership over it as well.*

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A, and Freelance Heritage Researcher

It was suggested that those who were seeking to make disruptive change within their organisations particularly valued the support from the RCMG in terms of research and examples of good work happening elsewhere.

*The kind of change we need to be truly representative could be disruptive as well as creative, and that needs to be supported actually by high quality research and sharing of best practice, so we can do that in a really, really informed way. So, that support is absolutely vital.*

Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

The RCMG's work to bring together and share ideas and practice from different organisations was seen to help people to explore ideas for future work.

*I think some of the research, certainly bringing together thoughts on what different museums and heritage sites are doing, helps us to consider what steps we need to take to move to the next stage.*

Andrew McLellan, Head of Learning and Participation, Pitt Rivers Museum

#### Building solidarity for the LGBTQ individuals leading this work

In many cases, it is members of the LGBTQ community who are leading this strand of work within their organisations. The RCMG's research was seen to support these LGBTQ individuals to bring their lived experience to their professional lives and to help develop their confidence in taking the work further. Having the underpinning of the RCMG's academic research helped to shift perceptions that this work was simply a personal crusade for the LGBTQ community and encouraged others to show solidarity.

*A lot of people who will engage in this work will be members of the LGBT+ community themselves, it can be a difficult thing to take something that is an immensely personal part of your life, a part of your life that will have probably exposed you to discrimination and prejudice and danger, to then have to leverage that experience for your work because you care. That's a very difficult thing to do unsupported, so any support the RCMG can give to individuals within organisations is incredibly important.*

Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

*I recognise that for so many members of LGBTQ communities, they're juggling an involvement with culture and heritage alongside day jobs and all sorts of other commitments. So many people are working as volunteers. The kind of support, profile, and academic status that the RCMG brings is really important to the sector that, for very good reasons, can sometimes feel quite fragile and embattled.*

Liz Ellis, Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight, National Lottery Heritage Fund

Outside of the National Trust, the learning shared from the *Prejudice and Pride* project encouraged organisations to offer widespread training for staff and volunteers which helped spread ownership of the project across the whole team.

*[Training staff meant that] if it's an LGBTQ programme and they're not necessarily LGBTQ, they can still take ownership of it and they can still have the opportunity to show their allyship and champion the project. I think that doing that before a launch is something that we've learnt from this Daily Mail scenario. That's a really strong positive that has come from something that was really painful at the*

time. A lot of organisations are making sure that there's full buy-in across the board, across all staff and across all volunteers.

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A, and Freelance Heritage Researcher

*Richard came to share his work with our [training] cohort. It was enlightening for those in the room without a queer identity and for those with a queer identity it was affirming and empowering. It helped create an inspiring and inclusive space. It was a highlight of the programme. It's not hugely tangible or measurable but I know that following the work of the department over the years has helped us to be allies in the space and develop exhibition content which does justice to the power of the communities we are working with.*

Anonymous

At the National Trust, individuals who were directly involved in delivering *Prejudice and Pride* shared powerful examples of the impact of this work had had on them. Facing these challenges and helping to make changes within the Trust had forged important connections and enabled people to continue pushing practice forwards together. There was a sense of community amongst those who had worked on this pioneering project.

*On a personal level, the 2017 Prejudice and Pride programme was a welcome addition to the organisation's programming calendar. I was not long in post with the organisation and I was not out at work. The year brought its highs and lows - and it was the fall out of Felbrigg that made me realise the importance of being a visible leader, having a place at the table and having your voice heard, and that straying beyond my comfort zone in this way could change things for someone else. This was a piece of personal growth that has seen me drive inclusion work within the National Trust and go on to take up a leadership role within the LGBTQ+ Network, and become one of the most visible people within the organisation. I'm not sure this would have happened without the catalyst of the Prejudice and Pride programme and the support of colleagues, but I am certainly glad it did.*

Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager and Co-Chair of the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network, National Trust

*RCMG's impact went beyond the scope of LGBTQ-related work and has helped me understand the nature and approaches to change within the Trust. It's helped me feel proud of my work and of others' contribution. It has formed a community within the Trust, the 'survivors' who in fact were the pioneers. As such they felt the isolation and vulnerability and the awe of exploring new territory. We've shared practice across the sector and within the Trust and it has gone on to influence other projects (e.g. Everyone Welcome).*

Christopher Cleeve, Operations Manager, National Trust

Christopher spoke at the *Prejudice, Pride, Place* conference in 2018 and then again at the *Curation and Experience* conference which was attended by 150 people with more delegates online. The work with the RCMG had given him confidence to talk about his own experiences and to encourage others to be allies. At this point, the national public programme at the Trust had moved on from LGBTQ to another thematic focus, which made it feel particularly pertinent. Christopher felt that speaking at the conferences helped position Sutton House within the National Trust context.

*[At the conferences] I was emboldened to speak about my lived experience in context of inclusion as a call to arms for the people at the conference to be good allies which felt particularly resonant when the national public programme themes changed.*

Christopher Cleeve, Operations Manager, National Trust

There were also seen to be important personal benefits for those working on similar projects beyond the National Trust.

*We felt so proud that we had engaged with the RCMG. As gay gallery owners who have gone through Clause 28 and other forms of homophobia throughout education and politics, we felt more confident as an organisation because of RCMG and the research they have done to feel even prouder of who are as an organisation but more importantly who we are as gay people.*

Nigel Durkan, Manager (Owner), The Weavers Factory

*The various events have also personally made me feel more at home in my own community and has brought me closer to those within it that share my interests and passions.*

Kate Drinane, Tours Administrator, National Gallery of Ireland

#### Forging connections between organisations – convening power

The RCMG was seen to bring organisations together, helping to create a connected, supportive community and giving people confidence in their own LGBTQ work. The RCMG and surrounding community were seen as allies, supporting existing work and helping to develop new practice.

*We have been developing a new way of working with our LGBTQ communities, embedding the work within our organisation. RCMG's work has meant we have felt part of national work, changes taking place.*

Susan Eskdale, Community Engagement, Royal Pavilion & Museums

*We have been proactive in LGBTQ work since our inception in 1991 and house large related collections (and the organisation was founded by lesbians) so the impact for us is having allies and support in the form of RCMG - we don't feel so alone these days!*

Anonymous

Having been part of *Prejudice and Pride*, the National Trust's Sutton House found that community organisations were now familiar with their LGBTQ work. Dr Sean Curran, Community Learning Manager, reported that they were now 'often approached' by LGBTQ+ organisations who wanted to collaborate, for example the LGBTQ+ film festival Fringe! have held their events at Sutton House.

As National Trust for Scotland started to develop their LGBTQ offer, they attended the *Prejudice and Pride* conference and the *Inclusive Museum* event at the British Museum, both of which were said to be 'formative'. David Hopes, Head of Collections & Interiors, reported that the RCMG had raised his awareness of the work being done by Historic Royal Palaces and Historic England, which then enabled National Trust for Scotland to build links with these organisations and learn how they established the LGBTQ staff fora.

As part of their remit, the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions shares examples of good practice within its membership and beyond, and measures and analyses visitor data. According to Director Bernard Donoghue, one of the most significant behavioural traits of attractions which 'substantially grow and diversify their audiences' is that they are prepared to foster partnerships with unusual partners in order to improve and diversify the stories they tell. He saw that the RCMG gave organisations the confidence to develop these important partnerships, potentially with positively disruptive results.

*One of the most significant traits is that those organisations who are prepared to take risks to foster partnerships with unusual partners to tell their stories better - often provocatively, creatively and inevitably with a degree of disruptive force - to win new audiences, particularly those who have never, or rarely, seen themselves and their communities' stories reflected back before. This is the value of RCMG's work in a nutshell. Giving confidence to enable that to happen.*

Bernard Donoghue, Director, Association of Leading Visitor Attractions

Internationally, the RCMG's work with the National Trust on *Prejudice and Pride* was seen to have inspired other organisations to work together. Susan Ferentinos reported that although the National Trust in the USA has a number of sites with LGBTQ stories, 'virtually none of them are talking about it.'



She felt that the success of the coordinated approach in the UK had influenced some organisations in the USA to coordinate activity for the anniversary of the Stonewall uprising in New York. Whilst this coordinated approach was smaller in scale than *Prejudice and Pride*, Susan felt that without seeing the success of the UK example the US organisations might not even have attempted to coordinate activity.

*Honestly, Prejudice and Pride was a shocker for museum people in the US. It seems very hard to imagine the US National Trust having that kind of coordinated effort [...]. It was an influence on a few dozen people in the US that work in this field [...] from organisations that wanted to commemorate the anniversary of Stonewall in some way and how they might coordinate with each other so that it's more of a nationwide thing as opposed to a bunch of random things. As the lead of that, I have no evidence, but I feel like that was definitely influenced by how impressive Prejudice and Pride was in the fact that it was coordinated.*

Susan Ferentinos, Public History Researcher, Writer & Consultant

### Positioning work within a wider context

Respondents reported that the RCMG's active research supported them to improve their LGBTQ practice by positioning it within a wider national programme of activity. For example, a national festival commissioned four new artworks and curated over 20 additional events as part of the anniversary in 2017. This was well received with good engagement at the time and continuing to date.

*[The RCMG] gave us confidence and credibility and enabled us to look at the impact of our work as part of a wider programme and anniversary. By noting the anniversary centrally as a coordinating body, we inspired an unprecedented local engagement in queer historical narratives in our grass roots festival. This increase in LGBTQ events has continued beyond 2017.*

Anonymous

*I collected material for a book, several articles, and some presentations. [The RCMG] gave me confidence moving forward and heightened some case studies. The Centre is extremely well known and highly regarded as a leader in the field.*

Anonymous

### Raising the profile and bringing the work together

Liz Ellis, at the National Lottery Heritage Fund, felt that without the RCMG's input the LGBTQ work across the museum and heritage sector would be 'much more low profile and fragmented.' As a funder and policy maker, she felt that the RCMG encouraged organisations to come together to meet challenges.

*In the funding landscape, [the sector] is often in competition for resources. So, for us as a funder, trying to see how we work together on sharing challenges, I think the RCMG's convening power is really helpful.*

Liz Ellis, Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight, National Lottery Heritage Fund

For Laura Bauld at the Burrell Collection, there was a sense that the RCMG was a connecting thread, joining organisations together. In 2016, when many organisations were marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales, the RCMG was seen to be connected in some way to big projects happening at Tate, The British Museum, the V&A and the National Trust. Although there would still be LGBTQ work happening across the sector, without the Centre, Laura suggested that the work would not have been so cohesive.

*[Without the RCMG] I actually think the LGBTQ work in the sector would be more piecemeal. It'd still be there but it wouldn't have that presence. I think the sector would still be trying to figure it out. In a way what they've done is they've become a conduit to how we figure it out, how we do this, the processes involved, what's the best not just for the organisation but for your community. Without that, I think we'd still be many years behind, I think, and thus failing our communities.*

Laura Bauld, Project Curator, Burrell Renaissance Project, Glasgow Museums

## 6.3 In Focus

### 6.3.1 Reflections on developing thinking

Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager and Co-Chair of the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network reflected on the ongoing impact of the RCMG's collaboration across the organisation.

*In the three years since the Prejudice and Pride programme began in 2017, I think there has been a lot of learning, stretching and growing for us in the National Trust, as an organisation. We started the conversation around LGBTQ+ narratives, histories and issues in Prejudice and Pride and since then we have had lots of conversations, more people have come to the table to join the conversation, we have checked our blind spots, addressed some erasure and omission and sought to turn exclusion into inclusion, in both the stories we tell and the organisational culture we foster. All this has worked towards changing and challenging long-held preconceptions and perceptions of us as an organisation, our dominant narratives, who we are as an organisation, who we are for, who we are relevant to and whose stories we look after and tell.*

*The legacy of the Prejudice and Pride programme has been huge organisationally - some powerful LGBTQ+ stories and community histories were researched, uncovered, shared and added to the archives. However, despite the progress made I feel there is still further work needed to address and secure the permanence of these stories and the inclusion of these stories become part of the canon of stories told at a place, and not just anniversary programming. Our LGBTQ+ supporters see themselves and found relevance in our places, in our histories, in our archives and we need to ensure that we remain relevant to this community and consider LGBTQ+ programming part of our core conservation purpose, remembering that conservation is not just the preservation and looking after of places, objects and collections, it is also the transfer of significance from one generation to the next - the transfer of stories and meaning.*

## 7 Developing practice

### 7.1 Reach

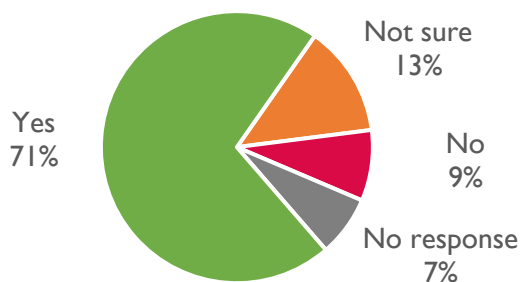
This section explores the range and diversity of the individuals and organisations whose practice has been affected by the RCMG's research.

#### 7.1.1 Developing LGBTQ-related activity

The RCMG's research was seen to have **helped 71% respondents to develop more/better LGBTQ-related activity**. From The Weavers Factory, a small independent gallery in Oldham, to large institutions such as the National Gallery of Ireland, there were positive responses from across the UK and internationally.

Q: Has the RCMG's research helped you to develop more/better LGBTQ-related activity?

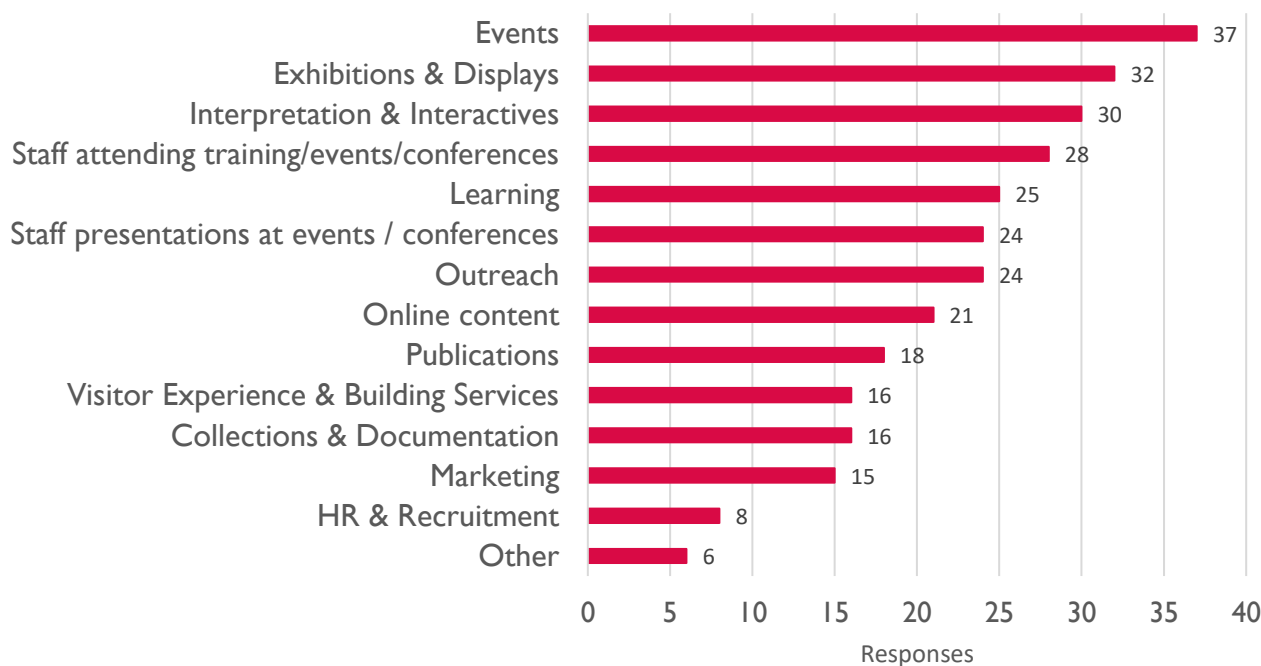
77 responses



People reported that the RCMG's research had helped them to develop activity. The most popular type of activity to have been helped by the RCMG's research were Events, and Exhibitions & Displays, followed by Interpretation & Interactives, and Staff presentations at events/conferences.

Q: What kind of activity did you develop?

59 responses



*The RCMG's work and publications on LGBTIQ+, inclusion and activism have crucially helped to establish gender sensitive work in our museum - from research and database work and a call for objects to staff training and gender-neutral toilets.*

Dr. Sophie Gerber, Custodian & Curator, Technisches Museum Wien, Austria

*Over the past 10 years I've produced, coproduced and run tours and events at Historic Royal Palaces, Museum of London and The British Museum. Over 200 people came to the first tours at the Tower with 98% positive feedback. Since then the Tower has made them a fixture of their programming. Similarly The British Museum has taken the tour I developed for them from Untold London and The Little Gay History and now runs it monthly. Thousands of people are now able to access histories that were formerly buried in the archive. Richard's work was instrumental at the start of the Untold London project when we started exploring hidden queer histories. The work since at RCMG has been instrumental in fostering an environment where museums are comfortable telling everyone's story.*

Babs Guthrie, Digital and Heritage consultant

*We organised a programme of events in our theatre including the LGBTQ poet laureate, an Oscar Wilde play and of course girl.boy.child by David McAlmont which was the highlight. We had 18,000 visitors during the year that we took part in the programming but more specifically we had 450 buy tickets for LGBTQ events. The highlights were seeing more diverse visitors to Smallhythe as well as creating debate amongst staff, volunteers and visitors. It has certainly put us on the map as a National Trust property where there is information to be found relating to the sexuality of former residents.*

Susannah Mayor, Senior House Steward, National Trust

## 7.2 Significance

This section looks at the extent to which developments in practice, resulting from the RCMG's research, have enriched, influenced, informed, and changed things for individuals and organisations.

### 7.2.1 Inspiring more and better LGBTQ work

The RCMG was seen to inspire people to create more LGBTQ-related work and to encourage good practice. Organisations felt the RCMG's research supported them to develop brave, creative and innovative practice.

*I have definitely noticed more LGBTQ+ specific programming in the sector - and programming DONE WELL! Which is a great change to see.*

Anonymous

### Challenging practice to push things forwards at the National Trust

At the National Trust, the RCMG's involvement was seen to develop practice by being both supportive and challenging. John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Culture and Engagement, explained that the *Prejudice and Pride* project had not always been easy, but that the organisation had been changed by the challenge. He felt that 'the RCMG gave us the right balance between support and challenge that we needed.'. This is explored further in the case study with Rachael Lennon, Programme Curator, National Public Programmes (Section 10.1).

*[The RCMG] created ambition and innovation, challenged us to work in new ways, defined ethics, research methodologies, gave us much needed confidence etc.*

Liz Girling, Assistant Director (Inclusion), National Trust

*RCMG's research helped to empower and give confidence to the National Trust. They also challenged the organisation, pushing it beyond its comfort zones, towards radical change. It helped to put inclusion, exclusion, blind spots, intolerance, and acceptance on our organisation radar and to make steps towards working on these within our organisational culture and also in the work we do around our supporters.*

Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager and Co-Chair of the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network, National Trust

At the National Trust properties, the RCMG's input was seen to have been very valuable in developing practice. Whilst the work was not without its controversies, there was also clearly positive recognition from visitors, volunteers, staff, and external organisations.

*RCMG's research and support was vital in helping the property to tell William John's story sensitively and appropriately. In particular, the training sessions with volunteers around use of language and the importance and relevance of the story and exhibition really helped to soften and change attitudes for the better, whilst empowering them to tell the story with confidence.*

Kate Bethune, Regional Curator, National Trust

*It was a year-long, award-winning national programme. A real highlight subsequently has been seeing National Trust gain recognition and awards for the programme, the creation of the staff and volunteer network, and giving Europe's largest conservation organisation the confidence to prepare public statements in support of telling and researching LGBTQ histories as part of its ongoing work.*

*The RCMG ensured that we developed ethical, open and robust ways to research, share and present histories at National Trust places in ways accessible to traditional and new audiences. The National Trust also hugely benefitted from RCMG's full support when a short period of intensive press scrutiny was experienced by the National Trust's programme.*

Tom Freshwater, Head of Public Programmes, National Trust

*During our Exile exhibition we saw our emotional impact score grow by 50%. The Exile project was shortlisted for the National Museum Awards, we also won the regional National Trust Directors Award.*

Tim Turner, General Manager, National Trust

*83% positive responses to Exile, which was very welcome (and reassuring). Really positive feedback from LGBTQ visitors who were especially pleased to find a connection with their history at the National Trust. One couple were especially pleased to find that the telling of LGBTQ history and experiences is now extending beyond 1980s club culture. Others reported that they now felt the National Trust was a place for them, that they belonged, and that they now felt less apprehensive about visiting an organisation that traditionally has been associated with conservative attitudes.*

Kate Bethune, Regional Curator, National Trust

### Sharing good practice to inspire work beyond the National Trust

The National Gallery of Ireland was inspired by the *Prejudice and Pride* project to develop their own practice. They have 'embedded consistent LGBTQIA+ history tours' which run all year round and are popular with corporate and community LGBTQIA+ groups. The gallery hosts *OUTing the Past*, the annual international festival of LGBT History, works with LGBTQIA+ youth groups, and runs awareness training for staff. Tours Administrator Kate Drinane reported consistently good feedback 'showing great engagement from the community' and a positive response from staff. The 2019 history festival sold all 130 tickets, with a waiting list of over 100 people, and there are over 20 attendees at the regular tours.

*All of this was inspired by the work the National Trust has done. Seeing the [RCMG's] work that was done in 2017 and since then gave us the confidence to go back to our institutions and show them it can be done successfully. It inspired our passion and creativity. It also encouraged me to really look for hidden histories and to reach out to others for help in finding them. The various events have raised awareness of the community internally and externally. The highlight has been hearing young people from the community say that they feel our institution is a safe place to visit and to work in.*

Kate Drinane, Tours Administrator, National Gallery of Ireland

In another example, it was said that the RCMG's work had helped the organisation to focus on the most important elements of LGBTQ work and to build this into their working practice. This led them to co-develop a temporary exhibition, create permanent gallery interventions and a programme of events, as well as cataloguing objects in their database.

*The project team took learning from RCMG's work to understand what the most important aspects of this work are, and how best to assimilate these into the project methodology and outcomes to enable the best results. The strong bond built between community curators has given the project legacy and will hopefully inspire similar work.*

Anonymous

Historic Royal Palaces in Northern Ireland reported that the RCMG has helped them to keep good practice at the heart of their new LGBTQ offer. They introduced a monthly LGBTQ+ tour and collaborated with local LGBTQ groups to consider how to develop their practice further, whilst also exploring how they could support these groups. They have held talks looking at the LGBTQ rights movement in Northern Ireland and 'the role of [the HRP] site in hindering the development of rights in the region.' They recorded 115 people at tours over 6 months, which was a particular success given that this was 'a new offer in the region, located in a rural village'. They also reported good radio and social media coverage. This new LGBTQ tour was significant, as Kris Reid, Assistant Interpretation Officer, explained; 'it's mere existence, irrespective of whether people partake in it, has a positive impact'. The new programme has enabled them to build stronger relationships with LGBT groups who have been invited to use HRP's community space. It has sparked conversations with the local heritage sector about delivering similar events.

*RCMG's research has been invaluable in ensuring the content and focus of our tours has been developed with best practice in mind. It is a daunting task approaching this subject for the first time but RCMG have been able to illustrate, through examples, how these projects can be delivered effectively with compassion and creativity.*

Kris Reid, Assistant Interpretation Officer, Historic Royal Palaces

There were instances of the RCMG's research directly supporting the work being done with young participants. In Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru have developed an active youth network that is 'taking the lead on the museums LGBTQ projects, including toilet redesigns, Pride, LGBTQ history month, a drag pageant and pop up exhibitions.'. Youth Engagement Coordinator Dr Sarah Younan reported that knowledge from the RCMG has been 'shared during museum discussions with the young people'. In Norfolk, The Ancient House Teen History Club, run by Melissa Hawker, is developing LGBTQ work including a film *How to Queer Your Museum*. The group tweeted to thank those who had supported them, including Richard Sandell who had visited the group to help allay anxiety about potential negative press coverage as they developed a queer exhibition.

*[The RCMG inspire] bravery in insisting that these histories and stories existed and the positive and creative way in which they sought to reveal them.*

Anonymous

*It's primarily as a result of being exposed to the [RCMG's] level of rigour and imagination that I feel I can operate at a much more intense level.*

Anonymous

### Embedding LGBTQ work as core practice

At the National Trust there was evidence that the RCMG's work had enabled LGBTQ work to become more embedded in regular practice. This included hosting an LGBTQ research placement funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and applying for grants to create an LGBTQ subject specialist network for heritage organisations.

At Sutton House, the LGBTQ programme has been well attended and built repeat visits. Being seen to deliver good work in the area has led to an increase in recruitment of LGBTQ staff. Elsewhere in the Trust, staff at properties which were not directly part of *Prejudice and Pride* still see a benefit to the

programme. One respondent explained that they are ‘part of the LGBTQ+ Network in the National Trust, whose work was a direct legacy of the *Prejudice and Pride* programming.’

*Anecdotally, our LGBTQ+ events and exhibitions have been our most consistently well attended, and visitors who discovered us through that programming have continued to visit and revisit, including to non-LGBTQ+ specific events. As a result of our strong programming, when we recruit new staff, a large portion of them identify as LGBTQ+ and say they were attracted to the role because of our authentic LGBTQ+ programming.*

Dr Sean Curran, Community Learning Manager, National Trust (Sutton House)

Since the initial programme of public-facing activity at the National Trust in 2017, Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager, reported that there was a legacy for the workforce. This includes the LGBTQ+ Network which Emma co-chairs, which has over 200 members, and has been involved in activities such as:

- attendance at 20+ Pride events annually,
- attendance at conferences,
- liaising with other organisation's LGBTQ+ Networks,
- annual Network event,
- publication of the LGBTQ+ guidebook, which continues to be on sale as well as other publications,
- events for regional members,
- LGBTQ+ Role Models and Allies programmes for staff and volunteers in the National Trust delivered by Stonewall, attended by a wide variety of roles and levels across the organisation.
- organisational discussions on gender-neutral bathrooms.

Whilst Emma reported that there was still more to be done to keep building on the momentum, the activity to date had been well recognised. There had been feedback from other organisations that they had been inspired, and the programme won a PinkNews ‘Third Sector Equality’ Award in 2018.

*The programme put LGBTQ+ issues and people in the spotlight and provided a platform for the formation of the organisation's first people network (with others now in the formation stage), the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network. This Network, started by a small group in 2017, has now over 200 members organisation wide and continues to advocate for and lobby for change within the organisation, and to make LGBTQ+ voices heard. It has run a successful LGBTQ role models programme and an Allies programme with Stonewall, has had two conference style annual events, has been called on to consult on policy changes within the organisation, and has led the organisation's attendance at Pride events. Since 2017, we have attended over 20 Pride events annually, and are visible to thousands if not over a million people through this activity. There are a huge amount of rainbow lanyards worn by staff and volunteers in the organisation – LGBTQ+ and allies.*

Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager and Co-Chair of the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network, National Trust

*We have identified the need to ensure our engagement with LGBTQ stories become a core part of our interpretation and programming. The property has developed a proposal for a collaborative research project with multiple interpretation outputs that would help to make this important transition. A different curator is now working with this property, but I believe they are still pursuing funding to get this project underway. At the very least, room guides are now more actively engaging visitors with the property's LGBTQ story.*

Kate Bethune, Regional Curator, National Trust

*The work has informed the way we develop our programming, it also builds on our approach to service and visitor experience.*

Tim Turner, General Manager, National Trust

### 7.2.2 Applied research – offering practical information and support

The RCMG was seen to offer practical advice to LGBTQ projects and help them to overcome challenges. Richard Sandell sits on the steering group for the Pitt Rivers *Beyond the Binary* project and has advised the team on their approach to the project. Andrew McLellan appreciated the RCMG's pragmatic, realistic approach to an activist approach: 'Richard wasn't trying to hide it all under some rosy umbrella. If you take on activism within museums, then these are the things you need to think about.'

The RCMG's research was said to give people comprehensive practical information which they could use when developing and delivering their projects. Emily Jeffers was involved in a partnership project between Beamish Museum, AgeUK and LGBT History Project North. The project developed community outreach and permanent interpretation of the lives of older members of the LGBTQ community. Beamish Museum recorded their 'greatest engagement numbers ever across social media posts', as well as radio and television coverage. The project was said to raise 'much awareness regarding LGBT+ history not being explicitly sexual in nature.' Jeffers reported that:

*[The RCMG's] information gave a solid footing for how to engage with community members and how to interpret things in a way that was accessible to community members and the general public who often have pre-conceived notions of what LGBT+ history is about.*

Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers at the British Museum, felt that the RCMG took a hands-on approach working on all aspects of projects such as *Prejudice and Pride*.

*The Centre is very practically engaged. I think it's very rooted in reality. Prejudice and Pride is very hand-on work, liaising, working with a big heritage organisation, developing approaches to interpretation, to highlighting stories, to working with communities, and then evaluating those approaches.*

### 7.2.3 External authority

By offering an external perspective, the RCMG was seen to support the development of LGBTQ practice in the sector. This included support given to individuals, to steering groups, and to projects. Dan Vo explained that, 'bringing in the external expertise unlocks a whole bunch of doorways.' Andrew McLellan at the Pitt Rivers Museum reported that Richard Sandell had been involved in the Lottery funded application for the *Beyond the Binary* project. When the bid was successful, Richard was on their wish list for steering group members who would help them 'have a real impact, not just on the Pitt Rivers museum, but more widely as well.'

*As soon as we got Richard on our steering group, along with the other amazing people we have on it, [...] it gives authority to what we're doing. It's saying, "This is important, and really important people within the museum world see this as being essential and are supporting it," and that I'd say helps us argue the point.*

Andrew McLellan, Head of Learning and Participation, Pitt Rivers Museum

*Sutton House's year long programme of LGBTQ+ exhibitions, events and programming would not have been as big of a success within the Trust without RCMG's fierce advocacy and support. The Trust is a timid organisation, so it was essential to those of us delivering these things to have the trusted and valuable support from RCMG. Having theoretical and practical support from RCMG provided an impetus for the National Trust to do better, and in turn has given permission, and resulted in less resistance, to those of us working on more marginalised histories and stories within the Trust.*

Dr Sean Curran, Community Learning Manager, National Trust (Sutton House)

### 7.2.4 Fostering ethical collaboration

The RCMG research encourages organisations to work with participants as equals. The Centre modelled the practice of extensive visitor research, talking and listening to communities who might be involved. In Wales, the Cynon Valley Museum Trust felt that their practice had benefited from the



RCMG sharing practical examples of this approach and of overcoming challenges. The Museum Trust had started to develop their programme by working with a local LGBTQ+ support group. This started off just as coffee mornings, and grew into a partnership with programmed talks, awareness events and increased social media presence. For Museum Co-ordinator William Tregaskes the highlight was 'seeing the group take ownership of the museum, defining the space and conveying their identity onto the museum'. The museum is now the venue for the Valley's support group and the talks are increasingly popular. The Museum are collecting data to assess wellbeing in the coming months.

*The museum has become part of the valley's LGBTQ+ community, a space that is seen as secure and accessible. It has become a community centre, something we believe the museum must be. The group has become stable and we support the group to use the museum as they need. [The RCMG's work] has shown how it can be done and where there has been challenges how they have been overcome.*

William Tregaskes, Museum Co-ordinator, Cynon Valley Museum Trust

*We did focused Neighbour Days to understand our visitor's views. We engaged gay youth, we also reached an over 60s audience who attended our exhibition and were visibly moved around issues of HIV, medication, suicide in the gay community. One 70 year old said that they had 'no idea how badly gay people are, and have been, treated'.*

Nigel Durkan, Manager (Owner), The Weavers Factory

The RCMG's approach changed Dan Vo's thinking and helped to consolidate his practice. The research legitimised an egalitarian approach which valued non-specialist engagement.

*It has changed the way I think. When I started at the V&A, I did not come from an art history background, so I felt like what I was doing was very renegade, very rogue, but it was underpinned by my background of community work. Seeing what Richard was achieving and being able to take those principles and models and theories, and then realising that it is about the community's view of the objects as well. It doesn't need an art history background, it is about non-specialist engagement with the works or the places. I think that's what solidified my practice.*

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator, V&A, and freelance heritage researcher

## 7.3 In Focus

### 7.3.1 The cumulative impact

Dan Vo, Volunteer LGBTQ Tour Coordinator at the V&A, and freelance heritage researcher, explained the ways in which the impact of the RCMG's research has been growing at the V&A and beyond, for over a decade.

#### What happened?

Around 2009, the RCMG supported Oliver Winchester to establish an LGBTQ working group at the V&A museum. This group was initially a support network for staff and went on to create the first events relating to queer identity at the V&A. The group continued Oliver's work, creating a booklet of 25 objects which related to queer histories in the galleries. This selection of curator-approved objects became the springboard for LGBTQ tours of the museum. As a volunteer, Dan Vo now coordinates the team of people delivering these tours which have been running for about five years. The V&A are currently working on a potential programme of *LGBTQ Rainbow Families* and material for teachers to use with pupils in the museum and at school. Dan is positive about the long-term impact of museums engaging children in LGBTQ issues.

*Having very strong, branded institutions discussing these matters and creating educational kits for teachers to have these discussions with children, I think [the impact] is immeasurable at the moment but, as long as it stays on trajectory, we should see something massively change.*

Building on his experience at the V&A, Dan works across the museum sector on projects including:

- The *Bridging the Binary* project, working with Ellie Armstrong to develop a set of LGBTQ tours for the University of Cambridge museums which reveal the histories of the place and the people who collected the objects on display, giving the visiting LGBTQ community the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the museums.
- Work with Gunnersbury Park Museum including developing their contemporary LGBTQ collections and collecting oral history with young people who are exploring their identity.
- LGBTQ work at Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd - National Museum Cardiff.
- Creating LGBTQ+ high school level resources for Hastings Museum with Olivia Bladen, which have been featured by the British Museum and promoted by LGBTQ+ educational charity Just Like Us who delivered the videos to up to 1.8 million school pupils around the country.

#### How did the RCMG's research help?

For Dan, the LGBTQ work at the V&A has evolved since these early days, but 'those fundamental steps take us back to Richard Sandell. [Without the RCMG] we wouldn't have the LGBTQ working groups, we wouldn't have the LGBTQ tours.' Dan described how his own work at the V&A was initially kickstarted by a book<sup>1</sup> edited by Richard Sandell and Eithne Nightingale, which included Oliver Winchester's writings about his LGBTQ work at the V&A, the activities they had done, and the challenges they had faced. Dan described this publication as 'the anchor for every single project that I've worked on since then'. Dan also gave particular credit to Richard B Parkinson at the British Museum, Clare Barlow at Tate, E J Scott at the Museum of Transology, Zorian Clayton and Dawn Hosking at V&A for their inspiring work.

More recently, seeing the practical applications of the RCMG's *Prejudice and Pride* work has been 'really interesting' for Dan. This includes the way in which the RCMG and the National Trust engaged with the collections, created artistic installations, and retold stories. For Dan, the controversy at Felbrigg about some volunteers' refusal to wear rainbow lanyards is 'always his primary case study' to share with the multidisciplinary teams he works with on various projects. Having such case studies has enabled him to encourage organisations to consider how to create buy-in from staff, volunteers, and visitors. This is particularly relevant when working with organisations who are doing LGBTQ work for the first time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, Sandell, R. and Nightingale, E. (eds), 2012

### 7.3.2 Inspiring more and better LGBTQ work

Dr Nikki Sullivan, Manager at the Centre of Democracy, History Trust of South Australia, reported that the RCMG's research had supported them to develop their LGBTQ practice. She outlined the many ways in which this had manifested itself with exhibitions, contemporary collecting, programming, audience development, organisational strategy, and professional training.

#### How did the RCMG's research help?

*The RCMG's research has inspired us, given us confidence, introduced us to new ways of thinking, and made us aware of work we had not previously encountered. All of these things have shaped our work in really fundamental ways. It's difficult to imagine what our efforts would have looked like had we not had access to the work of the RCMG and the scholars associated with it.*

#### What happened?

*Over the past four years my colleague and I:*

- *Have developed temporary exhibitions in collaboration with LGBTQ+ community members and groups;*
- *Are working in an ongoing way to ensure that there is an LGBTQ+ presence in our permanent exhibitions;*
- *Have actively collected LGBTQ+-related objects (and this is ongoing);*
- *Introduced LGBTQ+ events into the annual, month-long History Festival that our organisation runs;*
- *Ensured that our organisation participates in the annual LGBTQ+ (Feast) Festival that happens in our state;*
- *Carried out LGBTQ+ training for staff in our own and other Arts organisations;*
- *Developed an LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan for our organisation;*
- *Developed an online collections-based interactive that enables people to share 'queer' stories using our objects;*
- *Set up an ever-growing database of local community members who are interested in our events;*
- *Written about our work and presented our analysis at professional conferences and in a number of publications, including a book on queer museology.*

*Here are some facts and guesstimates:*

- *We currently have 300+ local members on our LGBTQ+ database.*
- *We have run around 10 LGBTQ+ events at the annual History Festival for the last four years, and in 2019 every event was, for the first time, booked out. Mostly the capacity was between 50-100.*
- *The three events we ran in the 2019 Feast (LGBTQ+) Festival each had full or near full houses (and places were limited to 25-50).*
- *The two temporary exhibitions that we developed with LGBTQ+ community groups each ran for six months and attracted approximately 2000+ visitors.*

*During this time, we have learned so much, both from others working in this area and also from the work we have carried out. We are passionate about continuing this work, liaising with and learning from others, and sharing our learnings with our sector colleagues.*

*All of the work we have done has been both rewarding and the source of much learning. We have received considerable media coverage, none of which has been negative; have built a large number of amazing, on-going relationships; won the respect of many of our colleagues; received lots of positive feedback, some of which has been incredibly moving/significant; and I would like to think we have inspired others. We have, as would be expected, received a small number of complaints about some of the work we've done, most specifically our temporary exhibitions, but we have been able to counter this with reference to our LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan, and the state government policies that inform it.*

## 8 Developing policy

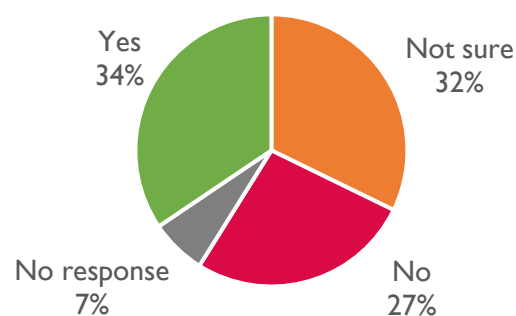
### 8.1 Reach

This section explores the range and diversity of the organisations whose policy development has been affected by the RCMG's research.

**Over a third of respondents reported that the work of the RCMG had helped them to develop strategy or policy relating to LGBTQ equality.** Of these people, ten were from the National Trust and there were seven people who were either responding in an independent capacity or who did not disclose an organisation.

Q: Has the RCMG's research helped you to develop strategy or policy relating to LGBTQ equality in any way?

83 responses



Respondents from the following UK organisations said that the RCMG's research has had an impact in helping to develop strategy or policy relating to LGBTQ:

- The National Trust
- The National Trust for Scotland
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
- Association of Leading Visitor Attractions
- Cynon Valley Museum Trust
- London Metropolitan Archives
- Pitt Rivers Museum
- The Weavers Factory
- University College London

The RCMG was seen to have had an international reach with respondents from the following organisations reporting impact on their policy or strategy:

- National Museum of Ireland
- National Gallery of Ireland
- Centre of Democracy, History Trust of South Australia
- Technisches Museum Wien, Austria
- Drexel University, USA

### 8.2 Significance

This section looks at extent to which developments in policy, resulting from the RCMG's research, have enriched, influenced, informed, and changed things for individuals and organisations.

At the National Trust, their partnership with the RCMG was said to have clearly influenced *Everyone Welcome*, their organisational commitment to being an inclusive organisation.

*Our work with RCMG in this area has informed our approach to our organisation-wide Everyone Welcome commitment, which has an ambition to be more inclusive and welcoming to all. Evaluation from Prejudice and Pride in particular, is informing our approach to our Everyone Welcome test programme, as well as to our £4m Stories of Everyone project.*

Liz Girling, Assistant Director (Inclusion), National Trust

*Our partnership with RCMG was key to gaining confidence and insight to inform our organisation position statements on inclusive histories more widely (based around protected characteristics), currently in preparation for release later in 2020.*

Tom Freshwater, Head of Public Programmes, National Trust

*[RCMG's research] highlighted the enormous positive response from LGBTQ+ supporters, as well as many other supporters. The fallout of the programme and the research, I feel showed the organisation the work it had to do on inclusion more generally and this has seen the development of and work on the Everyone Welcome programme - a wide programme on inclusion within the National Trust. Work on Everyone Welcome and inclusion has also seen the organisation, in its 125th year, change its strapline to firmly place people at its heart - changing from 'for ever, for everyone' to 'for everyone, for ever'. Inclusion is now a top priority for the National Trust and I think Prejudice and Pride was the catalyst for this.*

Dr Emma Dwan O'Reilly, Creative Programme Manager and Co-Chair of the National Trust LGBTQ+ Network, National Trust

Annabel Smith, Head of Volunteering and Participation Development at the National Trust has drawn on the lessons learnt about the volunteers' experiences of *Prejudice and Pride* to consider strategy. The knowledge gained from the project with the RCMG was combined with other research exploring the differences between the experiences of staff and volunteers done by Jenna Ward and Anne-Marie Greene in 2015, to give a 'useful theoretical context' for future strategy.

*I have used this to plan for change projects and influence how others are involving volunteers - in big strategic projects such as *Our Values*, *Service Principles*, *Visitor Journey Framework* and *Everyone Welcome*. We are starting to see the results - with consistently positive outcomes when volunteers are involved and engaged early. I don't believe we would have got to this point without the involvement in *Prejudice and Pride*.*

Annabel Smith, Head of Volunteering and Participation Development, National Trust

From Scotland to Australia to the USA, the RCMG's LGBTQ research was seen to have informed the content of strategies and policies, encouraging organisations to take a more inclusive approach.

*I have just written an Inclusion Review of NTS activity. RCMG research shone a light on the dimensions of inclusion which I considered in the report and the strategy which will issue from this will be directly aided by the RCMG's research in areas such as attitudes towards disability and people who identify as LGBTQ.*

David Hopes, Head of Collections & Interiors, The National Trust for Scotland

*RCMG research has helped to guide our process of strategic planning for studying the inclusion of LGBTQ+ experiences in our cultural institutions and museums.*

Laura-Edythe Coleman, Program Director, Arts Administration & Museum Leadership, Drexel University, USA

*A colleague and I developed an LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan for our organisation. The plan was heavily informed by the notion of inclusion as a (human) right and by the claims made by RCMG*

*researchers and others that (publicly funded) museums have a responsibility to ensure that they are accessible to as many people as possible. Our Action Plan embraces the assumption that there is always room for improvement, that inclusion is an ongoing challenge. The research carried out and made available by RCMG and its staff has played a significant role in demonstrating this.*

Dr Nikki Sullivan, Manager, Centre of Democracy, History Trust of South Australia

The RCMG's work was seen to give confidence to organisations such as The Weavers Factory who felt that their developing LGBTQ strategy and policy was informed by the Centre's thinking.

*After our meeting with Professor Sandell we felt more confident about developing our strategy and policies for our LGBTQ local community, being directly informed by Professor Sandell's research.*

Nigel Durkan, Manager (Owner), The Weavers Factory

### Influencing funders

There is evidence that the RCMG's research had an impact on national funding bodies. Back in 2001, the RCMG was commissioned by Arts Council England in partnership with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out a research audit which resulted in 'Not for the likes of you'. It brought together advice for cultural organisations about developing more inclusive messages in order to broaden their audiences. Phil Cave, formerly Director of Engagement, of Arts Council England explained that this report had been 'very influential research' which had helped the organisation to 'shift its view on barriers to engagement.'

*It was the first time we embraced the importance of 'decision making' on understanding relevance of cultural opportunities. This was significant in developing Creative People and Places. This in turn led to the Arts Council's new strategy being about 'relevance'. The biggest shift we have seen since the Arts Council was created.*

Phil Cave, Freelance, formerly Director of Engagement, Arts Council England

Building on this, in more recent years the RCMG's research has supported Arts Council England on a more practical level, enabling people to connect to and support the higher-level strategy.

*The organisation already had a clear strategy but lacked details of how to bring people with us and [the RCMG's] work helps with this. It gave me examples to use of practical ways that museums can address inequality and invisibility. Their work is never preachy. It's good art as well as carrying a strong message and making people think.*

Phil Cave, Freelance, formerly Director of Engagement, Arts Council England

From a museum perspective, it was suggested that the RCMG had the potential to influence funders. By sharing their research into LGBTQ work, Andrew McLellan at the Pitt Rivers Museum suggested that the RCMG's work could affect how the funders then decided to allocate their money, inspiring them to make more grants available for LGBTQ projects, and therefore encouraging museums to develop more work in this area in order to secure funds. The RCMG's connection with the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) is discussed further in a case study in section 10.2.

*The Lottery therefore may make more money available for LGBT projects. They will make people aware of that, and then people are more likely to go, "Right, I've got an idea, I'm going to go for it because I think I might be able to get some money here." I think there might be quite a long chain of kind of cause and events, of which the RCMG's research is a part.*

Andrew McLellan, Head of Learning and Participation, Pitt Rivers Museum

## 9 Overview of impact on the sector

### 9.1 Reach

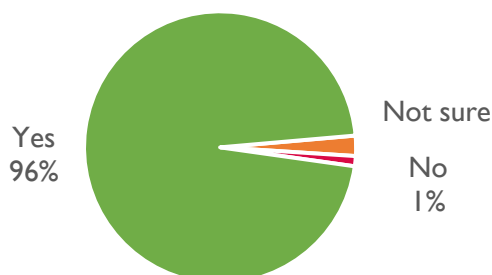
This section explores the range and diversity of those affected by the RCMG's research across the sector.

The survey asked respondents to specifically think beyond their own organisations and to consider whether the RCMG's LGBTQ work had had an impact on the wider museum and heritage sector. It should be remembered that this sample were already aware of the RCMG's work, with the majority of them proactively doing LGBTQ work. Nonetheless, as professionals working in this field, their observations on the wider sector are important and relevant.

**96% of respondents felt that the RCMG's research had had a positive impact on the museum and heritage sector.** The remaining 4% represented three respondents, two of whom weren't sure, and one person who said no. Notably this latter respondent went on to indicate that the research had had a positive impact on the sector in four different ways (specifically to develop awareness, confidence, programming, and narratives).

Q: In your opinion, has the RCMG's work on LGBTQ issues had a positive impact on the museum and heritage sector?

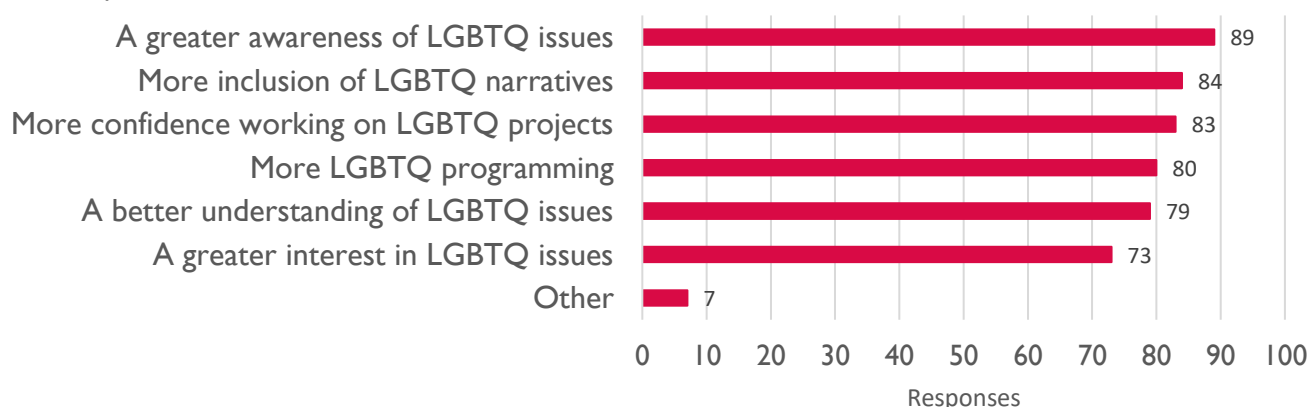
83 responses



According to the survey results, the RCMG's research was particularly helpful in developing awareness of LGBTQ issues, increasing inclusion of LGBTQ narratives, and building confidence in doing such work themselves.

Q: In your opinion, has the RCMG's research helped the sector to develop any of the following:

83 responses



Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers, at the British Museum observed that the RCMG had played a key part in changing LGBTQ work in the sector over the last 20 years, with the recent *Prejudice and Pride* project being particularly important. The RCMG had helped to build momentum, creating an environment where it was easier for projects to take place. For him, the 'quality and nature of the research is a little bit different', with no other organisation 'doing the same type of work to the same breadth and depth.'

*[Without the RCMG] the sector would be quite a long way back. It'd be a lot poorer. I think there's been such a big change in LGBTQ over a twenty-year period, and I think the Research Centre's been really key in that and in actually changing the sector. I think if all of that work was taken away, we'd be in a very different place. It would be much more challenging to get projects off the ground, because I think there's momentum that's built.*

It was noted that the RCMG's work in this area was part of the work was being done within the context of a wider increase in LGBTQ activity across the sector.

*RCMG's work has been valuable, but unlike its work with disabilities, part of a wider trend. There have been LGBTQ projects in museums for two decades, what has changed in the last five years or so is greater profile and more representation. This has been driven as much by LGBTQ activists working within the sector as it has by anything RCMG has done (contrast disability where there are fewer activists within the sector). At the same time the fundamental weakness of the sector hasn't changed: LGBTQ issues are still not systematically represented in permanent galleries; much of what has been done falls into special exhibitions, seasons, performances etc.*

Anonymous

## 9.2 Significance

This section looks at extent to which developments in thinking and practice, resulting from the RCMG's research, have enriched, influenced, informed, and changed things across the sector as a whole.

### 9.2.1 Developing thinking – awareness, interest, confidence and understanding

Respondents felt that the RCMG's LGBTQ research had had a positive impact on the sector because it had helped people to see why the work needed doing. It has given inspiring examples which encouraged action.

*RCMG has been the most important sector voice on LGBTQ issues and narratives, to profound effect.*  
John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Culture and Engagement, National Trust

*RCMG research breaks through the silence surrounding the LGBTQ+ experience in our cultural institutions.*

Laura-Edythe Coleman, Program Director, Arts Administration & Museum Leadership, Drexel University, USA

*The work has created a focus for the sector, has created dialogue, examples of good practice and leaders to learn from.*

Tamsin Russell, Workforce Development Officer, Museums Association

*There is undoubtedly a growing commitment in the sector to LGBTQ+ inclusion in museums. This has been made possible, and shaped, by the work of scholars such as Richard Sandell. Almost every published piece on this topic cites Sandell's work and, more specifically, draws on it in conceptualising LGBTQ+ inclusion.*

Dr Nikki Sullivan, Manager, Centre of Democracy, History Trust of South Australia

*They really are the go-to guys in museum diversity. Balancing warmth, professionalism, and the ability to push thinking and practice forwards, I don't know anyone who comes close to them.*

Professor Matt Smith, Professor of Craft: Ceramics and Glass, Konstfack - University of Arts, Crafts and Design, Sweden

*The RCMG work that I've been exposed to encourages a much more sophisticated, nuanced and thought-provoking response to LGBTQ+ issues, within and beyond LGBTQ+ communities.*

Anonymous



It was felt that, across the sector, the RCMG's research gave people confidence to deliver LGBTQ work. The research was seen to legitimise and justify the work being done. From students to senior leaders, from those in small museums to national organisations, the RCMG offered inspiration and space for rigorous thinking. This was seen to help push practitioners to develop meaningful LGBTQ work across the sector. When thinking about the RCMG's role in the sector, people felt that it was a leader in the field, a well-recognised, well-established, high profile centre of excellence.

*I feel that there is a recognised place for LGBTQ history within the sector, with RCMG as an established and effective centre of excellence.*

Tom Freshwater, Head of Public Programmes, National Trust

*The work that the centre has done has been fantastic and the interventions have been well promoted and theorised. I hope that instilling this into new cohorts of students will have a legacy effect on the sector.*

Ellie Miles, Documentary Curator, London Transport Museum

*Inclusion of narratives, in particular showing interventions can be wide ranging rather than knee jerk reactions to a lack of representation.*

Jon Sleigh, Learning Officer and Curator, Freelance Arts Educator

*It is important that we as a sector and the stories we tell are more inclusive and representative. What the RCMG help to do is to get those projects out there and feed that back so that museums and groups of any size can see that it's possible and to feel more confident in being able to do more, and to try things that they might not otherwise have done.*

Holly Franklin-Trubshawe, Curatorial Assistant

*The RCMG's high profile work has led the way for others to feel confident to pursue LGBTQ narratives, to have their work to cite, reflect and respond to. I feel there has been national programming that has been exciting, unexpected and daring.*

Susan Eskdale, Community Engagement, Royal Pavilion & Museums

*Although there is undoubtedly more to be done [...] it's a really exciting time for queer practice in museums and galleries and the work of RCMG continues to make that easier for us starting out on this journey.*

Kris Reid, Assistant Interpretation Officer, Historic Royal Palaces

## 9.2.2 Developing practice

### A robust evidence base

The way in which feedback was gathered and analysed on the RCMG's projects provided clarity and brought nuance to a complex subject across the sector. Annabel Smith, Head of Volunteering and Participation Development, at the National Trust felt that the RCMG had done 'brilliant work in helping people work in a more evidenced, research-based way'.

*The impact of the research and the practice based work cannot be underestimated! We have seen a seismic shift in how LGBTIQ+ lives are included and represented in the sector. The leadership of the department in this has been key in our opinion.*

Anonymous

*It's so important to have [this] robust and well-respected research into this work. It legitimises, connects and advocates.*

Catherine O'Donnell, National Gallery of Ireland, formerly People's History Museum

## Collaborative, generous approach

The Centre's practice of working with partners on real projects was seen as a strength. People felt that the sector benefited from the generous and accessible approach to sharing the research work.

*The RCMG has brought clarity and leadership - the research is accessible and de-mystifies. The RCMG also does a lot of the heavy lifting in the sector for this subject, providing a constant, unwavering presence and champion of LGBTQ histories and contemporary lives.*

Annabel Smith, Head of Volunteering and Participation Development, National Trust

*The work has been a fantastic case study for the rest of us to learn from. RCMG and the National Trust have been generous in sharing their learning, which has given us the resources to share with colleagues.*

Simon Brown, Curator, Newstead Abbey, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

*Each event and project has encouraged more networking and cross-institutional collaboration which is key to and at the heart of discovering more LGBT histories.*

Kate Drinane, Tours Administrator, National Gallery of Ireland

*As an Associate Lecturer, I regularly see the work of RCMG and Richard Sandell quoted and held up as best practice by colleagues and students.*

Tom Butler, Associate Lecturer and Tutor, Central Saint Martins/University of the Arts, London & LGBTQ+ Tour Guide, V&A Museum

## Prejudice and Pride

The RCMG's work with the National Trust on *Prejudice and Pride* was frequently identified by respondents as having had a particularly big impact on the sector as a whole. People said it was inspiring for all to see a large, traditional organisation, with sites in rural locations, working on a high-profile LGBTQ project. Respondents were impressed by the range and breadth of work and identified examples of best practice. They found that the conversations which had been sparked in the national press, and the way in which they were dealt with, had been particularly useful. This project was seen to give others in the sector permission to develop LGBTQ work.

*With particular focus on the National Trust's Prejudice and Pride, I think the impact on the sector is without doubt. For a traditionally conservative, 'British' organisation that largely serves to rural communities to engage with LGBT issues is HUGE. It has given 'permission' for other organisations to do the same and sparked a national conversation on the subject.*

Kris Reid, Assistant Interpretation Officer, Historic Royal Palaces

*[The RCMG has been] supporting the National Trust to confront its ignorance and prejudices. Their work may well mark a turning point when the National Trust gained the confidence to be a social movement as much as a protector of our heritage.*

Phil Cave, Freelance, formerly Director of Engagement, Arts Council England

*The National Trust programme stands out to me - and I think that it may not be a bad thing that it got positive and negative media coverage and that it shook up the membership base a bit. It's certainly raised awareness of issues and issue-based programme approaches.*

Gill Hart, Head, Devonshire Educational Trust

*The prime example has to be the development of activity at National Trust sites. This action permeated the sector and I believe encouraged more people to be involved and provide better activities.*

Jan Pimblett, Principal Development Officer (retired), London Metropolitan Archives

*I believe that Prejudice and Pride brought LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the museum and heritage sector to the attention not only of sector professionals who were interested in the issue(s) but, also, and perhaps more importantly, to those who had not given it any prior thought, to those who were resistant, and also, to*

*the general public. This kind of exposure significantly changes the landscape in which we operate: it makes it more difficult for museums and museum professionals to claim ignorance; helps to make those working in this area more confident; helps to provide legitimacy and justification to those who are nervous and risk-averse; and, undoubtedly, much more.*

Dr Nikki Sullivan, Manager, Centre of Democracy, History Trust of South Australia

*[Without the RCMG] I think the sector would be behind because the National Trust's Prejudice, Pride and Place project was so transformative. [...] We would not be where we are now and we wouldn't have the information we need now. There would still have been conferences, but we'd be one major advocate and intellect and source of energy down, and it would make a difference. The fact that there is this resource for the whole sector makes a huge difference, and without it, you'd have a significant cog not there, less would be happening, and it would be happening less well.*

Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

## 10 Case studies

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This series of case studies offers an in-depth insight into the impact of the RCMG's LGBTQ research as seen through the eyes of seven key individuals.

### 10.1 Rachael Lennon, Programme Curator, National Public Programmes, National Trust

Back in 2016, Rachael Lennon was a regional Visitor Experience Consultant for the National Trust. She was aware that there was 'almost nothing at all happening' around LGBTQ history at the Trust and that the organisation had little experience or expertise of working in this field. After some initial research, including conversations with Historic England's Pride of Place project, Rachael and colleague Tom Freshwater set up a pilot national programme to look at LGBTQ history in response to the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality. This was the first time that the Trust had ever programmed nationally in this way and there was little time to create the programme.

Rachael was keen to work with the RCMG as they were recognised specialists, with a track record of supporting the inclusion of marginalised histories in heritage practice. The RCMG were engaged to help the Trust explore how the programme might develop, which properties might be involved, and what support would be needed.

*Richard and the RCMG were perfectly positioned to help us. Richard was involved from the very earliest thinking about what Prejudice and Pride might look like nationally. [...] We agreed to bring RCMG in to help us, particularly around working with property teams and to supply them with some kind of support and guidance, and particularly confidence, to programme LGBTQ activity.*

#### 10.1.1 Building confidence and capacity

The RCMG helped to develop staff confidence and capacity at all levels of the Trust. Having the academic, authoritative perspective of the RCMG was seen to be reassuring and informative.

*I think one of the most impactful areas [...] in those early days was definitely around building confidence throughout the organisation. Having an external partner helped build internal confidence, at a senior level and at delivery level. I think having an external voice was really very helpful, and also, having an academic voice, a robust authoritative voice.*

The RCMG were well connected with the wider sector, so were able to put the Trust's new work into a broader national context. This sense of connection with other organisations was helpful for building confidence and a network for the future.

*[The RCMG] team could speak to the wider sector and the work that was going on externally, to try and help put the National Trust work in context of many organisations marking this anniversary, this is an active field. We're not alone in looking at these challenges.*

The RCMG also encouraged evaluation and reflection, enabling the Trust to 'be reflective on their practice' in order to learn from the action research programme.

*I think Richard and Jocelyn, particularly in the way they worked and the way they approached building confidence in the team was brilliant. They were reassuring and empathetic and gentle. Whilst also being ambitious and stretching. It was a very delicate line to walk. They did incredibly well with it.*

#### 10.1.2 Developing socially engaged and relevant practice

The RCMG had a particularly big impact on Rachael and her colleagues in terms of helping their practice to become more socially engaged and to have more contemporary relevance. Rachael said the RCMG 'stretched' them in this area, and that it was 'particularly valuable and interesting.'

*The RCMG supported us around contemporary relevance and making the histories we are looking to explore relevant to contemporary audiences. [...] I learnt a huge amount through working with Richard and the team, around socially engaged practice and community involvement.*

### 10.1.3 Active, hands-on collaborative partners

Rachael valued the RCMG's hands-on approach, as they embedded themselves within the delivery programme and helped staff deal with challenges as they arose.

*One of the strengths of the partnership is definitely how much the academic partners rolled up their sleeves and got involved in all areas of the delivery of our programme. They were very much part of our team delivering the programme. It was a very close partnership and that was exactly what we needed. It worked incredibly well.*

In particular, there was some 'public and press opposition' to *Prejudice and Pride* which was challenging at an individual and organisational level for the Trust. The RCMG's support through this difficult period was 'particularly important and reassuring'. Having the RCMG as an external partner, meant that the team did not feel they were standing on their own at this 'rocky time'.

*The major challenge of the Prejudice and Pride programme was obviously the negative press, publicity, social media opposition to the National Trust programme and queer heritage. The RCMG helped us maintain our confidence and keep clarity of purpose. [...] We faced a lot of challenges in delivering the programme and, as my main lead, Richard was such a phenomenal support throughout the whole thing. It made a huge difference; I can't imagine delivering it without him.*

### 10.1.4 Challenging and pushing practice

The RCMG had helped the Trust to 'grow the ambition for what the programme could be.' Rachael explained that *Prejudice and Pride* could have been 'a handful of properties doing something fairly small and low level', but the RCMG 'helped really expand out into a national programme.'

*The National Trust is one of the biggest conservation charities in the world. The impact of what we do across the sector is significant and we should be trying to lead in some of these areas. The external support through academic partnerships like this really help us to stretch and then maintain the ambitions around this sort of work. It stops you getting stuck in a particular way of working. It keeps bringing a bit of external challenge which is very healthy.*

*[Without the RCMG] the scale of the Prejudice and Pride programme would have been vastly reduced, and so the impact would have been vastly reduced. We would have lost that place that the programme had in leading for LGBTQ heritage within 2017. We wouldn't have had a conference, we wouldn't have had the publication, and we would have lost that moment of bringing the sectors together to reflect on the anniversary in 2017 and the practice within that year and what the next steps for the sector were.*

Rachael was very positive about the 'tone of the partnership' and felt that this encouraging relationship enabled the RCMG to both reassure and challenge the National Trust team.

*They're an incredible, very skilled partner in walking that line between comfort and reassurance and also stretching and pushing us to work a bit further. They pushed our ambitions but in a very comfortable, non-threatening, non-critical way. I have never worked in a partnership where I felt so comfortable to be so open about all the challenges we're facing and to problem-solve those challenges as closely together. There was no 'them and us' at all.*

### 10.1.5 Developing policy

The RCMG were seen to have had an impact on the National Trust at a strategic level. The *Prejudice and Pride* project led to further work with the RCMG looking at how the National Trust can be 'more

inclusive in histories that we tell across all protected characteristics'. The RCMG is now involved in the National Trust's *Stories for Everyone* inclusivity project which looks at socially engaged practice.

*When Prejudice and Pride was first launched, there was no inclusive histories strategy, policy or programme at all in the Trust, and now, we have an ambitious Stories for Everyone inclusive histories programme. The RCMG's involvement in Prejudice and Pride was instrumental in identifying that need and building the motivation for that, to such an extent that RCMG are now involved very actively in delivering and in testing the Stories for Everyone inclusive histories programme. That is a strategic area, it is massive, there was nothing before and now there is an ambition across all the areas of marginalised histories in the Trust, not just LGBTQ areas, but other areas of marginalised history. I think that has grown from the Prejudice and Pride programme. It's a huge impact, definitely.*

*I think the work with RCMG has vastly stretched the National Trust's ambition to be more inclusive about the histories that it tells across the organisation. And that's why they're involved in the Stories for Everyone inclusivity project. That partnership helped to set the ambitions for that.*

#### 10.1.6 Impact across the sector

The RCMG's role in this collaborative project is seen to have helped position the National Trust as a leading figure in LGBTQ work in the heritage sector. The conference and publication played a pivotal part in bringing people across the sector together to look back at the work which had been done across the country in 2017, and to look forward to future needs. For Rachael, the conference was 'incredible', and the best she had ever been involved in.

*Through the conference and publication and surrounding work, I think the RCMG partnership with us had a really strong impact on practitioners across the sector, and the RCMG partnership definitely helped us to network into that world more actively. [...] I think the National Trust would have struggled to deliver that level of sector leadership event on our own and we certainly couldn't have created the publication on our own. [...]*

The ripple effect of the project continues across the sector, giving others inspiration and confidence to do LGBTQ work. The National Trust is now part of a network of organisations who are developing work around queer heritage, including English Heritage, Historic England and Historic Royal Palaces.

*I think the echoes and the impact of Prejudice and Pride are still very active in the sector and it's still continuing to build confidence. So many people in the sector have come up to me, even yesterday, and say "You know, we were always saying, "If the National Trust can do it, we can do it". Certainly, English Heritage were not doing anything around LGBTQ heritage at all until they saw the National Trust do Prejudice and Pride, and that directly influenced them to set up an LGBTQ network and to start looking at queer heritage actively. That's a direct result of the Prejudice and Pride programme, which couldn't have happened on anywhere near the scale it happened without RCMG. I can't overstate the impact of the RCMG partnership on the programme, across the Trust, on my practice, and, through working together, on the sector more broadly. It was brilliant. It is amazing. It's the best project I think I'll ever be involved in.*

## 10.2 Liz Ellis, Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight, National Lottery Heritage Fund

Liz Ellis is the Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight at the National Lottery Heritage Fund. She has been in the role for just over five years, leading on inclusion policy work across the UK. Over the years, the NLHF have worked closely with Jocelyn and Richard at the RCMG, including connecting with staff responsible for strategy, museums and archives. As part of her inclusion work, Liz was 'particularly interested in thinking about the role of LGBT heritage'.

### 10.2.1 Profile raising and challenging discrimination

In 2017, research was showing a rise in hate crime, including homophobia. A study of the NLHF's Sharing Heritage grant programme highlighted that LGBTQ heritage was 'very underrepresented' in their funding. Liz invited Richard Sandell to write a blog about the role of equalities within LGBTQ heritage for the NLHF website. This was said to be a success, generating a large readership and highlighting the interest in LGBTQ heritage, including projects such as *Prejudice and Pride* and *Rainbow Pilgrims*. Liz felt supported that, despite his busy schedule, Richard had made time to write the blog. The success of the blog enabled Liz 'to lobby internally for a higher profile of LGBTQ heritage' in the funder's communications. This led to a two-month season in 2019 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall riots allowing the NLHF to 'reach a wider range of communities and to challenge discrimination'.

*I think there was a broad agreement across LGBT communities that there was almost a feeling of the job was done, equality was recognised. Whereas it was clear, from all sorts of research, that hate crime, discrimination, homophobia was still very strong and, in some areas, actually increasing. I agreed with senior colleagues, that both commissioning the research and having the blog was a start to raising the profile of LGBT heritage work. Of course, the work at the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries was really important. I wanted Richard to have a platform on our website. He wrote a really excellent blog, that had a huge engagement, both from our website but also through all his followers. That was very powerful in 2017.*

Having the academic weight and respect of the RCMG enabled Liz to champion underrepresented groups at the NLHF. For example, she was aware that lesbian heritage was underrepresented, compared to gay male heritage, but had found that internally this had been 'quite a difficult area' for her to champion. The external support of the RCMG helped Liz to advocate more strongly for these underrepresented groups within her organisation.

*I recognise that we live in a context of discrimination against so many groups with protected characteristics. Internally, I was concerned about the underrepresentation of lesbian heritage, trans, people of disabilities, people of colour within the LGBT movement. I knew that those were areas that the RCMG feel very strongly about, so that was really helpful to me in having champions outside our role as a funder. I was able to use the power they have as academics, the respect they have in the museum community, in order for me to push back with some of what I perceived as being a risk averse culture. [The blog's popularity] was really helpful to me in my policy role and it was helpful to me personally in championing issues where, basically, Richard had more power.*

### 10.2.2 Challenging organisations

The RCMG's research played a key role in the development of the NLHF's new funding framework which started in January 2019 and will last four to five years. A year of consultation in 2018 resulted in feedback from people who play the Lottery that they wanted to 'see more community benefits, more social impact'. External stakeholder organisations said that they wanted the funder to work towards challenging inequalities. The RCMG were seen to 'have been part of a critical mass in pushing for social justice' which was important to the new NLHF mandatory outcome that 'a wider range of people will be involved in heritage'. On the funder's website, this outcome is illustrated with an image from a project led by young LGBTQ people, something which Liz felt 'probably would not have happened two years ago.'

*I think the RCMG's work was crucial in terms of the overall consultation we did for our new funding framework. Stakeholders wanted, what is now our mandatory outcome, to involve a wider range of people. Challenging some of the inequalities that exist across the UK and in the heritage sector in particular was something that was discussed a lot. I think that their work has been part of that critical push and challenge for the heritage sector and for us as a funder.*

### 10.2.3 Collaborative academics

The RCMG was held up as model of good practice for working in an open, collaborative way, working across sectors to share knowledge and understanding.

*I think the RCMG has been a really strong collaborative force for social change. I always experience RCMG as being generous and open. I think they're an exemplar of how academic networks could work because they're so open to cross sector working and they're so generous about learning.*

The Centre was seen to successfully navigate the 'complex landscape' of power dynamics which can be present when large organisations, such as funding bodies and universities, work with underrepresented communities. The RCMG was seen to recognise this complexity, and to work in 'a very transparent way.' Sharing the work with the National Trust was seen to be 'really important', particularly discussions around the challenges faced around staff and volunteers wearing the rainbow lanyards.

*Inevitably, when we're challenging power relations, when we're thinking about social change, some people are uncomfortable. I think it's really important that within culture we recognise that process and we're honest about what's difficult, that we're engaged in learning and being open about how we learn from each other and how we learn from what's difficult. I've always admired that the RCMG enables a culture of shared thinking and shared recognition of challenges. I find that very personally helpful in championing change internally, as well as for the heritage sector.*

### 10.2.4 Applied research with creative results

For Liz, the RCMG's work is distinctive because it is based upon practice, working across arts, museums and heritage sector to produce creative, engaging outputs. This made it accessible for people, including those who might be first-time visitors to a property and who had never thought about LGBTQ collections, or those who aren't represented in LGBTQ communities.

*I think the RCMG is always very grounded in practice. I think it is really intelligent, it's really creative, it's really enjoyable. It engages people in lots of different ways. I think they're imaginative and really good at cross sector working.*

The RCMG gave Liz access to 'very applied research' in a 'broader context of critical thinking'. Liz reported that being able to share this research was useful for her and the broader NLHF.

*I think being able to share the process and the critical thinking around equalities in a very applied way has been fantastic. Not only personally to me, but also more widely as an organisation.*



### 10.3 Laura Bauld, Project Curator, Burrell Renaissance Project, Glasgow Museums

Laura Bauld is the Project Curator for the Burrell Renaissance Project at the Burrell Collection, one of nine venues run by Glasgow Museums. Their current refurbishment includes redisplaying collections and embedding socially-engaged practice in the new displays. This redisplay addresses LGBTQ inclusion and the promotion of non-heteronormative narratives. Laura has been involved in LGBTQ collections research, community co-participation and consultation.

Glasgow Museums had worked with the RCMG in 2009 on the *sh[OUT]* exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art, looking at contemporary art and LGBTQ experiences. The resulting report was shared with staff working on the Burrell Renaissance Project. Richard Sandell is now on an advisory panel for the refurbishment project, advising on socially-engaged practice and museum activism.

#### 10.3.1 Developing understanding of LGBTQ work

Laura was keen to work with the RCMG their research has been a strong influence on her professional practice since taking Museum Studies at Glasgow University.

*Personally for me, [working with the RCMG] was an absolute dream. They have been able to guide me in the complexities of engaging with this strand of work. [...] They are the leaders in socially engaged practice. To have that wisdom, that experience, it's invaluable. It has framed how I think about socially engaged practice. I wouldn't be the curator I was today without them.*

#### 10.3.2 Academic endorsement and rigour

Whilst there was support from senior management to engage with LGBTQ histories, this area had not previously been explored by all of the curatorial team. At the start of the project, it was sometimes challenging for Laura to help others to see the benefits to their collections of exploring LGBTQ histories. Laura observed that often work connected to protected characteristics can fall to one individual in an organisation, who may have a personal connection or be an ally. Having the weight and rigour of the RCMG's academic research was key to encouraging curatorial colleagues to engage with this work and see that it was everyone's responsibility.

Laura felt that the RCMG's strong academic research was the stimulus for Glasgow Museums to explore LGBTQ work. Whilst to some extent the Equalities Act would have resulted in the museum service addressing this area, Laura believed that, without the RCMG, limited resources would have resulted in LGBTQ work not being addressed with the same urgency or strategic priority. Building upon the RCMG's research enabled this work to take place across the organisation, rather than just within certain areas. Laura felt that colleagues now had more understanding and confidence in LGBTQ work, and proactively talked about and engaged with LGBTQ histories.

*Without that research, these histories would still be hidden, [...] that group would still be marginalised within specific remits of this organisation, [...] it wouldn't have been pursued, thus making the museum less inclusive. I honestly don't think it would have happened.*

#### 10.3.3 Challenging organisations

For Laura, knowing that the RCMG 'has faith' in the project and that Richard Sandell is willing to commit time to it is 'a huge sign' of the value of the work. She is keen not to let them down and wants to show that their support for the project is well-placed. Working with the RCMG kept the organisation 'in check' and helped keep their practice fresh, relevant and challenging.

*The RCMG certainly has had a huge impact on the Burrell. [...] They see the potential in us for delivering the policies, procedures and practices that they want to see in museums.[...] It keeps us on our toes in a good way, challenging ourselves, rethinking, reframing, asking questions of ourselves. Sometimes those questions are challenging, but without that, we're not the best museum service that we*

*can be for the people of Glasgow. We want to hold ourselves up to the standards that they have promoted. If we don't meet those standards, we're not doing our job.*

#### Accessible dissemination

Having the research captured in accessible, easy to share reports was particularly useful. Laura said the *Prejudice and Pride* report was her Bible, her 'absolute go-to'. She circulated it to colleagues as soon as it was published. This enabled her to share 'all the incredible things that had been unearthed' and how the National Trust had benefitted from the project. Laura felt that the analysis of visitor engagement for *Prejudice and Pride* was particularly useful for Glasgow Museum's visitor studies team as it shared a range of evaluation questions, the spectrum of visitor reactions, and examples of how to deal with the responses.

#### 10.3.4 Developing practice

It was said that the RCMG's research gave museum practitioners the solid base on which they could build a more inclusive, socially-engaged practice. Richard has directly supported Laura, meeting to discuss LGBT programming across Glasgow Museums and offering specific feedback and advice on written interpretation for the Burrell. The LGBTQ work being spearheaded at the Burrell has had an impact on the other museum services, with LGBTQ tours developed for Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and the Glasgow Museum's Resource Centre. Laura undertook research in 2019 to look at LGBTQ inclusion across Glasgow Museum Service. This included community consultation, with events and a community café, which resulted in requests for more programming, exhibitions, and activity in schools. The community consultation has resulted in 'hugely positive feedback'. There was an overwhelming demand from community groups for tours, requests to see objects or for people to speak at community sessions.

The Scottish government pledged that education would be more LGBTQ inclusive by 2020. Schools have seen that the museum service is doing LGBTQ programming and collection research and so have identified it as a place which could support them to embed LGBTQ within their curriculum.

*I don't know of many other organisations being approached by schools to help deliver. For me that's a huge positive benefit, that they're trusting us to be able to aid and support them in that.*

The RCMG advocated for the museums to deliver a more permanent LGBTQ offer, going beyond temporary programming to change things that 'don't necessarily structurally support LGBT inclusion'. The Service is looking to expand their collection to ensure that it is more representative of 21<sup>st</sup> century LGBTQ lives. Laura plans to update accessions paperwork with inclusive pronouns that are welcoming for all. They have been supported by the RCMG to 'reframe the collections to allow for LGBTQ narratives to come through' in such a way that they are relevant for their visitors and their museum. The RCMG support in this area was seen to be 'absolutely crucial.'

*For me, one of the things that the Centre has pushed is the need for permanence, and the need for this [LGBTQ work] to be there all the time. It's not just something that's for a special event. It's not just something that's there for a week or LGBT History Month.*

#### Collaborative academics

The RCMG's approach of working with communities was seen to be distinctive. Unlike other organisations which might not carry out consultation work, the RCMG engage with communities early on, so they can shape the process and inform the project with their own experiences.

*[The RCMG] champion marginalised or underrepresented voices. Those voices are the ones that help shape their way of working, so that when they come out with these incredible reports and research packages, it's been done with the people that it's meant to serve. It's not been done by people that don't understand and don't have lived experience. It's absolutely for the community, by the community, and I think that's one of the amazing things about the Centre.*

## 10.4 Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation & Volunteers, British Museum

Stuart Frost leads the interpretation and volunteer teams at the British Museum. The interpretation team focus mainly on the museum's special temporary exhibitions, as well as working on the permanent galleries. Stuart is responsible for the interpretative planning which helps shape new exhibitions, displays and projects. His team inform their work with visitor research and evaluation. Stuart also manages the Access and Equality Manager post and the team of 500 volunteers, about half of whom meet directly with the public in an interpretive context.

### 10.4.1 Developing thinking – the activist museum

Stuart has been engaged with museum sector LGBTQ issues for some time. His professional and personal values were shaped about 20 years ago by the University of Leicester MA Museums Studies.

*[The RCMG] has certainly heavily influenced the way that I think and work. It's changed the way that I think. I trained as a historian and taught history in schools, but I'm very heavily focused on the impact that the projects have on people and the capacity for the museum to act as a place where people can encounter ideas that will hopefully make them think or feel differently. I've absorbed so much of the work of the Centre through reading the publications and through conferences. I think fundamentally the way I think has been shaped by Leicester.*

Stuart explained that the LGBTQ practice at the British Museum 'draws quite heavily on the work that the RCMG and Richard Sandell have done', including books such as *Museums, prejudice and the reframing of difference* published in 2006. The British Museum is a large organisation with large and complex operational needs. It can be hard for staff to step back and reflect on their practice and to develop their work, so the work of the RCMG is critical for instigating change.

*I think the museum has a massive potential to be a very powerful agent for social change, but on a day to day basis, it's a big, complex organisation [...] and I think capacity to think and to reflect and to begin to develop changes is limited. I think it's absolutely crucial to be able to draw on research and work from outside of the sector, where people are able to bring their big academic brains and to really research and work on these areas. Those ideas then feed into the sector and give people that are working within the institution new ways of thinking and new ideas that they can then absorb, adapt, develop and work. It's really fundamental to have those research centres that are developing ideas and ways of thinking, and that can then drive change in a way that maybe it's difficult to do within an organisation where it has such an established trajectory and there's a focus on delivery.*

The RCMG has helped Stuart to develop his thinking about LGBTQ issues in a museum context. For him, it is 'fundamental' that museums have an important role to play in social justice and human rights. The British Museum's challenge was how to implement this approach to ensure that their work contributed towards equality and social justice.

In 2017 the British Museum opened their first major LGBTQ-themed exhibition, *Desire, Love, Identity: exploring LGBTQ histories*. Stuart proposed and co-curated it with Laura Phillips, Head of Community Partnerships, taking Professor Richard Parkinson's book *A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity across the World* as the basis for the exhibition. Alongside the exhibition was a trail of 15 related objects around the museum, which continued as a permanent part of the visitor offer. It is estimated that about half a million people will have, at least, come into contact with some part of the project at the British Museum. The exhibition was adapted and toured five other UK museums where it was seen by about 260,000 people.

The exhibition included material from the ancient world to the present day. It had a global scope and needed to be relevant to visitors today. The exhibition opened at a time when there was a lot of LGBTQ activity happening nationally, much of which was 'celebratory, and rightly so'. However, Stuart felt that there was also a need to highlight that the campaign for LGBTQ equality is ongoing, and that 'around the world the situation varies very widely from country to country.' They chose to draw on the

United Nations' Free & Equal campaign, including statistics about the number of countries where legislation still criminalises homosexuality. Whilst Stuart acknowledged that across the museum there was 'a spectrum of opinion' about the role of museums, he felt that thinking of the Learning and National Partnerships teams had been 'heavily influenced' by the RCMG's research.

*Contributing towards equality, social justice is obviously an area where [the RCMG's] work has been exceptional over a long period of time. In the exhibition [at the British Museum], we had a section which drew on United Nations' campaign called Free & Equal. That strand of the exhibition is definitely heavily influenced by the work that has been going on in Leicester. Within the museum, there'd be a spectrum of opinion about what the role of a museum is. One of the exhibitions that we had here, there was a comment: "Oh, the museum shouldn't be a soapbox," but I think there are certain issues where the museum absolutely should be having an opinion on something and be arguing for a particular position, and I think that obviously very much aligns with the RCMG's work.*

#### 10.4.2 External support

At the early stages of developing *Desire, Love, Identity*, having the backing of 'an external academic whose work is very highly regarded in the sector' helped galvanise internal support for the project.

*I think it was helpful for us internally in terms of our work helping get the project through and getting internal support for it. To be able to say that we'd discussed ideas with Richard and had his support and input was really, really helpful in giving people internally confidence that we knew what we were doing, we were talking to the right people, we were taking advice. Richard's influence was really helpful throughout the whole project.*

Importantly, the RCMG was seen to be a good communicator, able to present their research in accessible, tactful ways which connected to staff across the museum.

*[They have] the ability to express some of the issues in a diplomatic way - it's very easy to work with them and talk to them, and I think that's quite important in an institution like this on a project that's cutting across so many different departments, and where there might be anxieties and concerns.*

#### 10.4.3 Developing practice

Professor Richard Sandell was on the advisory group for the *Desire, Love, Identity* exhibition, supporting the team from the initial proposal to editing interpretive text.

*We were really grateful to be able to draw on his expertise. He's obviously got an amazing knowledge of what's going on across the sector and is aware of how different projects have been received and where there'd been problems.*

Richard Sandell's input into the exhibition itself was said to be 'really crucial'. Along with other members of the advisory group, he reviewed all of the exhibition text. Having this range of different perspectives led to small changes to the text, which had a 'very significant' impact on the tone and ensured that 'everything was expressed in a sensitive and appropriate way.'

## 10.5 Matthew Storey, Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

As Collections Curator at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), Matthew Storey's role covers the six palaces within the group. His academic and research work is focused on LGBTQ interpretation and history. Matthew first connected with Richard Sandell whilst at the V&A, where he led on research and interpretation in LGBTQ issues as co-chair of the museum's LGBTQ Working Group. He was invited to speak at the Prejudice, Pride and Place conference in Birmingham in 2018 and contributed to the accompanying publication.

### 10.5.1 A driver for social change

Developing LGBTQ work was particularly important for Matthew at Historic Royal Palaces. He explained that the RCMG research had shown the significance of people feeling accepted and recognised by those very organisations which had historically been powerful oppressors.

*All of this support is incredibly important work because [it is important that] people feel accepted in organisations that often carry the weight of the historical tradition, of the authority of often ruling classes. [...] For people who are part of the LGBT community to feel accepted and valued in these spaces where they may not in the rest of their life, especially for older people who have faced terrible discrimination and legal discrimination in the past, to feel accepted in a place like this is incredibly important.*

For Matthew, the RCMG's work around LGBTQ representation had an important role to play in the UK and further afield. It had the potential to contribute towards increasing respect and recognition for LGBTQ communities in the UK and across the world.

*[The RCMG is important] as an advocate for showing that LGBTQ lives, identities, emotions are just a part of being human and have been part of being human in every single human society in the past. I think it is an incredibly powerful part of social advocacy and a driver of social change towards greater acceptance and understanding. Britain is by and large a liberal country, but not everybody in Britain is accepting of homosexuality. If you look internationally, the situation is very different and very dire, so actually anything we can do to increase respect and acceptance is vital.*

### 10.5.2 External support

The RCMG was seen as a source of support when dealing with particular challenges, or when exploring new ideas. Being able to seek advice and endorsement from a leading expert gave Matthew confidence to explore new ideas for LGBTQ work at Historic Royal Palaces.

*Richard is fantastic. I've talked to Richard for advice when I've needed it, when something's come up and I've needed to talk to an expert in the field of LGBT research interpretation, to talk about where to go with it, to get his advice. To know that if I decided to pursue something, I could have his support and the support of the Research Centre was really important.*

On a practical level, although HRP is an independent research organisation, Matthew felt that 'there can be strength to collaborating with an academic institution' such as the RCMG, when looking for academic funding.

### 10.5.3 Developing connections

The network which developed through the RCMG's work with the National Trust, and the associated conference, was seen to be 'very important' for Matthew. The conference and publications itself had been an opportunity to promote the HRP's own work.

*The networks that I've used through the work of the RCMG, especially colleagues in the National Trust, have been really, really important. [...] The opportunity to publish was fantastic, and the opportunity to share best practice as well through that conference and through that publication. Of course, a*

*conference like [Prejudice, Pride and Place] is fantastic because you can make new contacts and build your professional network as well as showcasing the work that your organisation has done.*

Historic Royal Palaces invited Richard Sandell to speak at their symposium organised with Ulster University at Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland. Having his broad international expertise was particularly useful in this context.

*I think Richard's long experience in advocacy in this area as well is incredibly powerful, and if you can get Richard on board with a conference, you know it will go well.[...]*

*I think that's a great example of how, Richard and [the RCMG] are supporting our work in an area of the United Kingdom, which is in its own place really for LGBT research interpretation. It's quite a different environment there to the south east of England, which I'm more familiar with, so having his experience there I think will be really useful.*

#### 10.5.4 Informed by audience research

Matthew found the 'high quality audience research' carried out for *Prejudice and Pride* particularly important and useful. Although HRP have their own LGBTQ-related visitor research, it was gathered from attendees at LGBTQ events rather than a wider pool. Matthew's key learning from the RCMG's wider audience research showed that having LGBTQ content at a heritage site 'gave people the chance to have conversations' which they might not have in everyday life. He felt that having LGBTQ histories 'back where they belong' in a heritage context helped redress the way people looked at and talked about the past. The RCMG's evidence showed that this had 'an incredibly positive impact on visitors' which Matthew believed was 'a driver for social change'.

*One of the most important things for me is the audience research that the RCMG did with the National Trust. That's been quite transformative [...] I've used that a huge amount in my work. What I took home was the unique idea that people want to have these conversations. They want to be open-minded. They want to engage with the modern world as they see it, but they don't know how to because they just don't have a chance in their normal lives. Presenting it in a heritage site, gives people that chance. It has an incredibly positive impact today, and it's because it allows people to explore LGBT issues, to see that they have a place, and I think that's a real driver towards acceptance and understanding.*

#### 10.5.5 Developing practice

Inclusion, access and representations are said to be priorities for HRP, however, as Matthew explains, as the organisation explores this further, there will need to be changes including new ways of thinking and working. He believes that it is better to do this 'in an informed way' and having RCMG's support to do this 'is incredibly important.'

The RCMG's research helped Matthew to develop LGBTQ practice at Historic Royal Palaces. Whilst HRP were experienced in delivering LGBTQ events and seasons of activity, Matthew felt that the RCMG's audience research could help them develop permanent or temporary interpretations. The RCMG was seen to be unique in its focus on applied research.

*I think for me as an academic and someone who leads in this area, conceptualising the work is a big challenge. Thinking about how I talk about LGBT, how I approach that history, the best ways of interpreting it, that is where the work of the Centre helps me now. The evidence of that audience research, [shows] how powerful it is to have interpretations on the ground as part of the visitor experience for every visitor, that research again is very important indeed.*

*The focus on using practice is really important, and I think that's what they bring as well as that long history of the prestige of the Leicester Museum Studies course. I think there are lots of people looking at histories, but it's the focus on museum practice that I'd be looking to the RCMG for.*

## 10.6 Lisa Power, LGBT historical consultant and equality activist

Lisa Power is an LGBT historical consultant and equality activist, responsible for organising the annual LGBT History Month for Pride Cymru in Wales. Lisa is a Trustee of Queer Britain, the project to found a museum of LGBTQ life and history in the UK. She was a co-founder of Stonewall, Secretary-General of the International Lesbian and Gay Association, and Policy Director of the Terrence Higgins Trust. Lisa is the author of an oral history of the London Gay Liberation Front and is 'involved in ensuring that the LGBT history of the later twentieth century is accurate rather than filtered through people's current political preconceptions.' Lisa credits the RCMG with launching her into a 'third or fourth career', which has led to her talking about LGBT history at Cumberland Lodge.

Lisa has primarily engaged with the RCMG through conversations with Richard Sandell and the Centre's publications. She first saw David McAlmont's *Prejudice and Pride* work *girl.boy.child* at the National Trust Plas Newydd. This inspired her to invite David to perform part of the work at the Senedd in Cardiff.

### 10.6.1 Developing understanding – beyond the accepted narrative

Lisa's work focuses on LGBTQ history since 1967. She is fascinated by 'how much is already being erased', particularly things which pertain to lesbians involved in the political realm. Lisa felt that there was 'often a resistance' to LGBTQ history, which is not always seen as 'serious history'. The RCMG's work at Plas Newydd had really made Lisa 'think about how we ensure that it's not just the accepted narrative stories that get told, it's not just the people who fit into respectability.'

*I've realised that there is so much stuff that is hidden. [The RCMG has] helped me immensely in looking at the diversity of LGBT+ history, and not letting it be confined to the accepted narrative, which is all about parliamentary change. It's enabled me to look at social change, change in terms of arts and media.*

Lisa noted that there were 'not enough role models around LGBT'. She felt that this was a particular issue in Wales, which has only recently started to explore its LGBTQ history. For Lisa, both David McAlmont and the Marquis of Anglesey were 'very different kinds of icons that people can relate to.'

*For LGBT History Month, we've done an exhibition called Icons & Allies, and what was fascinating was that half of the responses we got were, "I didn't know he was gay," and the other half of the responses were, "I didn't know she was Welsh". Wales, in particular, has not explored that history and it really is beginning to now. We've now got two excellent books from different people on Welsh LGBT history, and it's all starting to happen. It's all kicking off. One of the real badges of this work in South Wales, as far as I can see, is that it's not just LGBT people who come along. We get quite a wide and random set of people showing an interest.*

Beyond LGBTQ history, Lisa sees that the RCMG's research has encouraged and supported historical research across a range of non-dominant narratives including colonial histories.

*Once you start thinking about one different lens on history then you start to think about who else hasn't had their story told. [...] The erasure of anything that isn't the dominant narrative, and that's straight versus gay, it's male versus female, it's white versus black, all of those things. The odds of you being remembered reduce with how far you're outside the dominant group, so I'm quite keen on making sure that all the people outside the magic circle have a voice, and I think that's very, very much what Richard's been doing.*

### 10.6.2 Collaborative academics

Lisa noted that it was helpful to have the backing of a big institution, such as a university, as it gave validity to the research being done. However, unlike 'quite a lot of the work in this sector', she felt that the RCMG's work was particularly accessible and inclusive. Richard Sandell was seen to bring a spirit of generosity, sensitivity, and fun to the work and to promote the work of others.

*Your history is about other people but you bring yourself to it, and it's really important that you bring the ability to listen, to observe, to think outside the box and to be generous. Richard's sensitive, he's thoughtful, he's questioning. I think people have to fight so hard in academia that they get a hardened shell. Richard is not out for glory. He's a pleasure to do work with.*

### 10.6.3 Applied research

The work of the RCMG was particularly valuable to Lisa because it was rooted in real, practical projects. She appreciated that the *Prejudice and Pride* research 'acknowledged both the difficulties and the joys' of 'this sensitive work'. The report was 'empowering' for Lisa, as it gave her a sense that the work could be done, whilst being realistic about the challenges. Working with the RCMG has given Lisa confidence in her own work and a sense of solidarity with others.

*I'm not big on theory, I'm big on practice, so I've learnt from how Richard does things. I've learnt from the practicalities of what gets done. [Working with Richard] has given me improved resilience. You think, yes, yes, this can be done. I know I'm not the only one. Richard brings comfort, comfort that you're doing the right thing.*

### 10.6.4 Creative dissemination

The RCMG's research was seen to be shared in a creative and accessible way, engaging the public in a range of 'utterly different' ways. The performance of *girl.boy.child* at the Senedd was watched by about 150 people, from Assembly members to school pupils and was also made available online. Lisa reported that it was well received, with 'excellent formal feedback, a very high level of engagement, interest and satisfaction. People absolutely loved it.' For Lisa, the RCMG's work has enabled her to 'see that crossover line between academic history and engaging people in lively, new forms of showing history'. The work was said to have been important for reaching out beyond the LGBTQ community.

*[The RCMG's work has] enabled me to see that crossover line between academic history and engaging people in lively and new forms of showing history to them. [...] I am particularly interested in how you make history interesting to ordinary people. People seem to think that history is something for dry textbooks, and having somebody like David McAlmont performing, we clearly got people in who were more interested in David McAlmont than history, but who then stayed for the history [...] Doing that kind of work in the Senedd is part of what makes sure that it doesn't stay in academia, that it reaches out to ordinary LGBT people and people who are just interested in LGBT stuff.*



## 10.7 Armando Perla, Project Manager, Museum of Movements and human rights activist

Armando Perla is Head of Human Rights at the Montreal Holocaust Museum in Canada and International Advisor on Museums, Human Rights and Social Inclusion in the city of Medellín in Colombia. At the time of the interview, Armando was the Project Manager for the Museum of Movements in Malmo in Sweden. He was part of the founding team of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Armando has primarily engaged with the RCMG through their accessible online publications and by following the work of Richard Sandell.

### 10.7.1 Connecting people across the world

Armando explained that finding common connections in the LGBTQ museum community was important. The RCMG's work acted as a connector between international practitioners. When meeting new practitioners, finding a shared enthusiasm for the RCMG's projects and research, enabled people to identify allies, share examples, reach out to others or to join forces with projects.

*I often speak with people around the world, talking about articles or research. [The RCMG's work is] great as a connector. It's really good as an ice breaker or to help when you don't know where people are standing on the issue. If you find that common interest, that's a good way to find allies in the field. I find that it provides that frame of reference and articulation to really bring everything together, not just what I'm doing, but also tied to all the practitioners around the world.*

As well as enabling people to collaborate and share good practice, the connections enabled by the RCMG's work gave a sense of validation and community. This was seen to be particularly beneficial when people were doing LGBTQ work in isolation within an organisation.

*For the people that I talk to right around the world, [the RCMG] helps us realise we're not alone. That's important, because sometimes in our institutions it feels that we're the only ones doing this work. We feel alone, we feel hopeless, we feel that we're not going anywhere. Then you start seeing there are actually other people who are working on these issues, who have the same objectives, the same aims and who are working from research, it really is very validating. It's also very comforting to know that there are other people out there and that we're not alone. There is strength in numbers. I feel that we are a community and the creation of this community is important. The RCMG has an important role in being a hub for all of us to come and join forces.*

Armando is currently working on projects in Latin America with several museums or initiatives which focus on LGBTQ issues, he is also part of the Thinking Through the Museum Network, a group of academics and museum practitioners in Canada which include the cluster Museum Queeries. He is also collaborating and in conversation with museums being created with an LGBTQ focus in Canada, Costa Rica and Chile. These are all projects which would 'directly benefit from the work of the RCMG' and he is keen to connect them.

*I think they will completely benefit from the knowledge. The research provides a great framework for us to articulate what we do, to present our work in much more structured ways.*

### 10.7.2 Connecting theory and practice

The RCMG's research offers Armando a theoretical framework and context for his activism in the museum sector. Describing himself primarily as a practitioner 'doing activism inside of the museum world', he has found the research useful for articulating his practice and strengthening his case.

*The main benefit has been for me to start matching practice and theory. I am very much a practitioner, an activist in the museum world. As a practitioner, fighting for inclusion in the museum world, it's not easy and you want to always have really substantiated, strong arguments. Having access to the RCMG's*

*research has really helped me articulate some of those practices that I'm already doing sometimes [...and] helps to make the argument better.*

The RCMG was seen to be an organisation which proactively supports practitioners doing LGBTQ work in museums. The Centre was seen to build positive, mutually beneficial relationships with practitioners. Armando felt that this helped drive forward the work being done on the ground.

*I think something that makes the RCMG really unique and something that is really, really helpful for us is the focus on activism and on supporting the activism that is happening out there. I've found that commitment to socially engaged thinking and practice is reflected in the relations that the Centre is building with practitioners. The match that happens between the research and the activism on the field is what is needed right now for many practitioners. We need to have those connections in academia to really propel us and to make us go further. And the other way around as well because academia also needs the lessons from the practice on the ground.*

### 10.7.3 Museum theory is not neutral

For Armando, the most important thing about the RCMG's LGBTQ work is that it takes an activist stance. It goes beyond reporting on activism in museums and takes a proactive position in its own research, in order to make social change. For Armando, this type of research is generally lacking in the sector and is much needed at this time.

*There is academic rigour in what [the RCMG] produce, but it's also research that is taking a position in itself as well, as a creator of social change. I'm tired of this nonsense that museums have to be neutral spaces, museums have to be objective and depersonalised. We talk about activist museums, but I think what is lacking is that museum theory also matches that activism that is happening in museums. So instead of museology just describing that activist, that museum theory also becomes activist itself [...]*  
*I think this is what completely separates the RCMG from all the research that is out there. The RCMG is not content with describing the activism, but is also doing activism through the research. The RCMG it's not just a research centre, but a centre that is out there taking part in very interesting activist projects, making really advanced social change.*

Armando is supporting the Museum of the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico, which had an exhibition on different artistic representations of Zapata, an important figure of the Mexican Revolution and an iconic image of masculinity and virility. A queer artist chose to represent Zapata naked in a pink hat and heels, riding a horse which had a big erection. This caused controversy, with protests outside the museum causing it to shut for a few days and attacks being made against LGBTQ community activists. Armando organised a letter of support explaining why the work was important, in order to contribute to the activism and to support the LGBTQ community. The letter was signed by 41 LGBTQ practitioners and academics across the world, including Richard Sandell.

*Richard was very, very helpful and he really wanted to be part of it, to contribute and disseminate our letter of support. I think it is good to know that we can always count on support for the activism that we are also doing on the ground.*

As an LGBTQ activist himself, Armando feels that the work in this field is currently under attack. This means that the RCMG's research is particularly needed now so that the progress which has been made, is not undermined.

*We're seeing how all the work that many activists before us have been doing, is really being attacked. Research like this is completely needed because activists on the ground need to be fighting shoulder to shoulder with academics who are also activists. It's important because we cannot stop. We have to stay vigilant and our activism just needs to continue and to grow.*

## 11 Appendix – RCMG’s key LGBTQ research

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- Dodd, J. & Sandell, R. (2001) *Including Museums: Perspectives on Museums and Social Inclusion*, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, Leicester.
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- Sandell, R. (2010) ‘Museums and the Human Rights Frame’ in R. Sandell, R., & E. Nightingale, (Eds.). (2013). *Museums, equality and social justice*. London and New York, Routledge.
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- Dodd, J., Plumb, S., Bergevin, J. and Sandell, R. (2018) *Prejudice and Pride An analysis of visitor engagement and response*, RCMG. Online. Available at <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/publications/prejudice-and-pride-an-analysis-of-visitor-engagement-and-response>
- Event: *Museums and the Transgender Tipping Point*, February 2019
- Events: *girl.boy.child*, 2018-2019

## 12 Acknowledgements

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Catherine Mailhac - Researcher

Catherine Mailhac is an independent evaluation and engagement consultant working across the cultural sector. She supports organisations to better understand their visitors, participants, and stakeholders, and to encourage creative engagement and activism. Clients have included the National Trust, the Science Museum Group, Museums Sheffield, and Museum Development North West. Catherine became an Associate of the Museums Association and a Winston Churchill Research Fellow in 2010 and is a Full Member of the Association of Heritage Interpretation.

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