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cal museum or botanic garden to see the 'real' collections. A variety of trails will be developed around existing resources, including garden-based trails at Kew and elsewhere, and museum or citywide trails in London, Leicester, Liverpool and other locations. Project materials, assistance from outreach officers, and seed money will be available to assist botanical gardens, museums and other organisations in setting up activities and trails. This will enable content generated by the project to reach as broad an audience as possible in a practical and cost effective way. Other ideas for users to extend their interest of these plants include an 'I Spy' guide to fruit and vegetables at Asian Markets, and instructions for growing the plants at home.

To date - April 2004 - the project is still in its early stages. The outreach work is due to start within the next six weeks and specifications for the website are being finalised. The project is due for completion in March 2005, although the life of the website and trails will extend well beyond this. Evaluation will be specific to individual phases of the project and include: extent of involvement with target audiences, user questionnaires, analysis of web statistics, and numbers of users of the website and trails. Overall the project is being assessed by Culture Online for its 'value for money'; the number of people reached through the project against the price spent per head. It is accepted that some parts of the project, such as the outreach work, are more costly than others. Long-term outcomes are also anticipated, such as a stimulation of interest in botany as it relates to day to day life; an increased use of cultural resources (including botanic gardens) by South Asian communities; and the development of lasting links among museums, botanic, gardens and community groups.

Visitor perceptions of human remains and their wider relevance to natural history

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Firstly then, the idea that led to the undertaking of this research was an interest in finding out what visitors thought of the displays of ancient Egyptian human remains that are found in many United Kingdom museums. However I realise that this paper may not seem directly relevant to professionals working in Natural History collections, I have been made aware though that some Natural History collections do contain human remains. In addition the research involved in this paper deals with the ethics of display and what it is acceptable to present to the public and this ultimately affects us all.

The museum profession in Britain then has for the past decade taken on board the issues of the retention and display of human remains and recently this led to the creation of a working party charged with looking generally at these issues, and of course that report was published last Autumn with additions. (Post the working party report some collections have now started the task of auditing their collections for human remains). However what all of this previous research and the submissions to the working party have overlooked is how museum visitors, a main stakeholder, react to such displays – do they have an issue with human remains being displayed, do they think it is ethical or morally repugnant?

Since the retention and display of human remains can be viewed as such a contentious issue, by certain groups, it can be helpful to apply the following division – human remains that have cultural descendants ie. Native American and Aboriginal remains amongst others and the less contentious group of remains that have no living cultural descendants ie. ancient Egyptian.

Working in the field of Egyptology it was natural for me to investigate this less contentious group with museum visitors. However the conclusions I reached might be a useful starting point when working on collections that display and store the more contentious remains as well as those collections that have had complaints about their primate displays for example and are considering future re-display.

This research was also prompted by what seemed to be a contradiction happening in London in 2002, namely 840,000 of the public visiting Gunther Von Hagens' *BodyWorlds* exhibition of 32 plastinated "human" bodies on the one hand, whilst at the same time the working party on human remains was collecting evidence on how best we could deal with the problem of having human remains as part of our collections. Therefore I was interested to see if the museum profession was becoming unduly sensitive over the issues surrounding human remains by using their own audience as an indicator. Would the public agree that it was inappropriate for museums to still continue to hold these remains or did they wholeheartedly approve

of their display?

This then was the context to the survey work that I carried out in three United Kingdom museums. Each museum was chosen for a variety of reasons. Firstly the British Museum was chosen because of the quantity of both its audiences and the human remains on display. The Manchester Museum, in the North of England is important because of the scientific work that is undertaken on its ancient Egyptian human remains and the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London, where I work, was chosen as it is a University Museum with a specialist collection with more 'specialist' audiences.

In establishing a choice of ten survey questions it was crucial to elicit a range of views from respondents. It was useful to establish what the public thought human remains actually were. Most importantly as a justification for displaying remains it was felt necessary to establish whether people had learnt more from viewing them in the three collections and if so what exactly had they learnt. A further qualitative, ethical question was to find out whether modern (that is less than one hundred years old) human remains would cause people a problem. This was felt to be a good test of whether people's views towards ancient and modern remains were contradictory. As each respondent was being asked questions that are in one way or another related to death or dead bodies, then it was interesting to establish what people thought would happen to themselves after death. Of all the ten questions, question five was the most important. Respondents were asked to choose the view offered that best summed up their thoughts about human remains on display. Four very distinct categories were offered that gave respondents the choice of allowing the museum to do what 'they saw fit' with the remains, to the statement that it was not appropriate for museums to hold human remains. For each of the choices the respondents were encouraged to discuss what they had chosen. The final four questions were quantitative and demographic establishing sex, age religion and educational level of respondents. The responses to these questions would be useful for establishing patterns of responses to certain questions. The respondents were chosen randomly in each museum and in order to have data that would present significant and worthwhile findings one hundred respondents were interviewed in each of the three participating institutions. After the responses had been collected the social sciences statistical package SPSS was chosen to analyse the raw data.

Results

Whilst the results for each museum were considered individually, for this talk only the cumulative results over the three collections will be considered.

Question one asked respondents what they thought human remains were. Bodies, body parts, bones and a combination answer of skin, bones and mummies was chosen by 280 respondents. Significantly despite these museums having mummies or mummy parts on display respondents rarely thought of mummies directly when defining human remains.

For question two 80% of respondents felt that they had learnt more about the ancient Egyptians from viewing the human remains in these collections. Knowledge gained included knowing more about burial techniques, funerary practices in ancient Egypt, personal grooming of individuals and the size and stature of the bodies. As is highlighted in the results of other questions the public seemed more comfortable to view human remains if there is deemed to be an educational value and for these respondents there was this link and by viewing the remains they believed they were deriving a benefit.

Question three asked respondents whether their thoughts would be different if they were viewing modern remains, that were less than one hundred years old. Well over half (54.7%) would be sensitive to viewing modern remains, whilst 45.3% would not have a problem. Many respondents felt it would be disrespectful to view modern human remains and that the bodies would be too close in time to us today, with potential living relatives. Also significantly many respondents could see no historical reason for a display of this nature. For many respondents they were happy viewing ancient human remains because they are so far removed from our own time and a large proportion said that there was an educational reason for viewing them. Some comments included displaying modern remains would be 'distasteful' and they were concerned that living relatives would be distressed by this sort of exhibition. Using the overall result of this question then we can draw the inference that some respondents are potentially contradictory in their views regarding human remains.

Question four asked respondents what they thought would happen to them after death. Almost half of all respondents (49%) believed that death was not the end. They believed that the soul or spirit continues in

some 'other place'. Many respondents (29%) believed that the body rots and is only a vessel that gets 'left behind'. Significantly, after studying the responses most young people (in the 16 – 34 age category) had a real problem with this question. In the 16 – 24 age bracket, few of them, perhaps unsurprisingly, had even considered the question and for some it proved traumatic to even consider the concept.

For question five a very high proportion of respondents (248 respondents – 82.5%) believed that these three museums should be allowed to display their human remains in 'whatever way they see fit'. These respondents were positive about these displays, but many did make the proviso that any displays had to be educational and done with respect. A number of respondents in all three collections claimed that they 'trusted' the museums to be responsible in their displays. Some 42 respondents (14.2%) thought that 'more respect should be shown' to the remains and 9 respondents thought that a separate 'burial area' would be more appropriate. Only 7 respondents (2.3%) thought that the remains should be kept in storage and not displayed and just 3 respondents (1% or one in each museum), thought it is inappropriate for these United Kingdom museums to have these remains and they would like them buried either in the UK or returned to Egypt. Therefore there is overwhelming support, based on this data, for the retention of these remains (99%) with only a 1% disapproval rating.

Questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 were all demographic questions and here it was interesting to try to establish whether a person's age, sex, religion or educational background could predict their responses to question 5.

Question 7 showed a significant difference between males and females completing the survey. There was a 62% female response as opposed to a 38% male response. Based on personal observation and the opinions of other museum professionals this ratio mirrors female/male attendance generally in UK museums, other than military museums that seem to attract significantly more men. Also more women seemed willing to answer the survey in each of the three museums, with quite a number of men, especially single male visitors refusing to complete it. In addition there were a large number of families accompanied by female adults visiting these museums as it was the school summer holidays. Therefore there are a number of factors that help to explain these figures.

Question 8 showed a consistent spread in terms of age ranges. Over all the three museums there was a significant bulk of respondents in the 16 – 54 age ranges (257 respondents - 82.3%).

Question 9 dealt with the religious affinity of respondents. Christians accounted for 58% of all visitors questioned, whilst Atheists were the second largest grouping at 24.7%. This gives a total of 82.7% and meant that the other world religions did not feature heavily enough – 4.7% were Jewish, 3% were Muslim and just 1% Hindu. It would have been useful to compare the top four religions to see if they had differing views on the issue of life after death and the ethics of displaying human remains. However due to the small number of respondents of these three faiths such comparisons were not viable and would not have been significant. Possibly work with focus groups in the future, with respondents from a variety of faiths would be a useful exercise.

Question 10 dealt with the education level of respondents. Almost half of all respondents (142 – 47.3%) left school at 18+, which presupposes that they went straight onto further education with 73 respondents (24.3%) leaving at 18. Generally then the respondents were reasonably well-educated with 231 respondents (77.0%) going onto undertake some form of further education either at 18+ or later in life.

Generally then most respondents supported the idea of the three museums displaying their ancient Egyptian human remains in 'whatever way they see fit' (82.5%). Most also felt that they had learnt something from viewing them (80%).

Conclusion

In conclusion using some of the issues raised by the survey it is useful to look to the future. Obviously when looking at the ethics of displaying human remains visitors are only one interested group. However they are undoubtedly the largest and most important of all museum stakeholders. Though the display of ancient Egyptian remains is not as contentious as the display of Aboriginal or Native American remains, and the public is generally positive about their display, we do perhaps need to look to the future re-display of these remains. This has been made more timely by the fact that contentious remains have been removed from display, but those remains that are unlikely to be repatriated have been left in-situ creating somewhat of a double standard. Many survey respondents viewed the remains merely as "vessels", these displays then

have been reduced to the level of mere objects that provide knowledge to subsequent generations. In addition to the 14.2%, another 3% of respondents responded by feeling that the present displays lack dignity.

A possible, more appropriate re-display could mean a separate museum area. One which might be darkened with a more subdued atmosphere, where people were given the choice to view the remains or not. This of course might attract a certain ghoulish interest in trying to present a more appropriate display. This is the way the Royal Mummies are displayed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, where no photography or talking is allowed. This public control might encourage more respectful viewing.

It is of course difficult to right past colonial wrongs of acquisition. There is now little chance of these remains being returned to Egypt and there have been no claims to this effect, though there have been requests to repatriate cultural objects. However it is not just that these remains have been isolated from their original funerary context (as indeed most have), but that none of these collections reflect on the reasons why they have them in the first place. The story of their acquisition and the colonial trade in antiquities has a place in their future re-display. Visitors can then make a more informed decision about whether it is right for museums to have these human remains as well as other ancient Egyptian objects.

As well as visitors and focus groups, curators, scientists, Egyptologists, educators and museum staff should all play a part in re-defining an appropriate final resting place. Significantly it was the warding staff at both the British Museum and the Manchester Museum who felt most uncomfortable with the idea of the remains being in a museum. This can partly be explained by these staff seeing them on a regular basis and so forming a more personal connection with them. As they more than any other group of people are most aware of the final resting place aspect of these displays.

Many visitors stated verbally to me that they “trusted” the museum to be professional in how it displayed its collections. However this trust is perhaps not justified when we do not present the complete picture and these human remains are all treated merely as objects surrounded by other objects. Over the past decade a number of groups from ICOM down have presented guidelines for museums holding human remains (<http://www.icom.museum/ethics.html#6>). Many of these have been developed to deal with the issues related to the possible repatriation of human remains, but some like the Museum Ethnographers Group guidelines deal directly with the care of human remains (<http://www.museumethnographersgroup.org.uk/HumanRemainsguidelines.html>). There are no explicit guidelines relating to collections that hold remains without cultural descendants and together with the parties mentioned before it is perhaps time to draw up a series of guidelines that deal directly with these collections. The Human Remains Working Party recommendations have started this process and this discussion needs to continue to give all museums guidance on how best to deal with their human remains collections

The results of this survey then are the basis of further research that needs to be undertaken with visitors, focus groups and other stakeholders in trying to establish a more ethical display of these remains. The statistics might point to a public support for a display, however there is a small minority that do not support this idea and significantly it is a ‘minority’ that is currently dominating repatriation claims for human remains with cultural descendants. Therefore it is important in trying to decide the future of these particular human remains to address all public views, not just the majority. In addition, though, the results of the survey highlight the fact that re-display is not a necessity and most visitor views towards these remains are ambivalent and somewhat contradictory, 14.2% of visitors wanted a more respectful display and museums do at least owe this truth to this particular set of human remains.

Target audiences and agendas

Liba Taub, Director Whipple Museum of the History of Science, University of Cambridge

I was very pleased to attend the NatSCA conference in Dublin, and to have the opportunity to talk about a subject which concerns everyone working in museums: how the desire to attract target audiences influences our institutional agendas. Rather than try to reproduce the talk I gave, here I would like simply to reiterate my 'take-home' message: to thine own selves be true. As specialists working with scientific collections, we must be true to subjects, our collections and, particularly, to those audiences who crave access to our collec-