

Topics ...



Activities to Consider

'We are only restricted in subject by our collections and exhibitions (and time!).' *Education Manager, Reading Museum Service*

'... the room itself is a "blank canvas" – access is facilitated by the activities themselves.' *Assistant Community History Curator, Walsall Museum*

A learning space has to accommodate the activities you want to offer users. Such 'fitness for purpose' must be a constant theme when rethinking your space, and throughout the design and fitting-out phases of a refurbishment or new build. You need to consider the areas of the curriculum and the types of activity to be covered. Additional factors to address include age ranges and the size of groups you want to cater for. For example, early years groups and adult groups require different approaches in terms of activities and facilities.

Our survey of national and non-national sites shows that many find their learning space restricts, and sometimes prevents, the development of certain activities and areas of the curriculum. When asked what they can offer and what they find difficult, or even impossible, to provide, sites said that the more practical the activity, the harder it is to accommodate that activity in the space. Such areas include art & design, design & technology, and science. Similarly, the greater the need for specialist equipment or fittings, the less likely it is that a curriculum area can be provided – for example, ICT, PE, dance, and music.

It is not that such activities cannot or should not therefore be offered: rather, that during the development process for a rethought, refurbished or new space, the education team should identify – and, for any new build, discuss with the project team and the architect – those activities and areas of the curriculum they intend to offer and the design and fitting-out requirements for doing so.

One vital consideration is how well a learning space can accommodate different learning styles. From our survey, it seems that sites can successfully support both formal and informal learning, but practical learning is more difficult. More problematic still is providing for the individual, self-directed learner or researcher. The facilities of a space largely determine the success or otherwise of catering for diverse learning styles. However, just as crucial are the look, feel and culture of the learning space. Is it a comfortable or sympathetic place to be for encouraging each kind of learning?

'The title "Lecture Room" on the door provokes negative comments and feelings from older children, although the paintings in the room incite the curiosity of all children. Carpeting and paintings on the walls limit capacity for messy activities.' *Museum Educator, Anon*

The areas of the curriculum covered by a site depend in part on the nature of its collection(s) or activities, and its level of specialisation – for example, if it is a science or environmental centre. Few sites are able to offer all areas of the curriculum, nor would many wish to. It is important therefore to agree priorities for what to provide, and to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in the physical elements of the learning space to introduce new themes and activities in the future.

The limiting factors relate mainly to the learning space itself, such as size, location and equipment. In addition, a site must assess the number, resources and expertise of its education and support staff who will be expected to provide and manage the range of activities and subject-matter.

'There has been a restructure of the Museum and more staff given to the education team. A priority is to develop new activities.' *Head of Learning, Natural History Museum, London*

'We are only restricted in subject by our collections and exhibitions (and time!).'

Education Manager, Reading Museum Service



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'... the room itself is a "blank canvas" – access is facilitated by the activities themselves.'

Assistant Community History Curator, Walsall Museum

Demand from schools also determines what a site sets out to offer. This is confirmed by our survey, which shows a common spread of curriculum areas being offered by both generalist and specialist sites. For example, history – including social, local and living history – art & design, and science are most frequently offered. Some way behind, but still common, are areas like architecture, citizenship, craft, creativity or creative development, design & technology, English and literacy, environmental studies and education for sustainable development, and geography.

However, few sites explore the potential of such key areas as maths, numeracy and modern foreign languages. These require no specialist equipment – merely a fresh approach. Even supposedly hard-to-accommodate activities like video, dance and music might be introduced more widely if related to the site's collections in exciting ways. Such activities may appeal to schools seeking new approaches to key areas of an expanding curriculum.

'I do not feel I am unable to do anything totally because of the room – though art and craft work is quite a hassle as a result. But the carpets are really good (and the underfloor heating) and many of the little children really like sitting on it – creating a really good informal non-school atmosphere.'

Education Officer, National Wetlands Centre, Llanelli, Wales



The Development Process

'Functionality is the main goal for learning spaces.' *Museum Educator, Anon*

The development process for a proposed new or refurbished space – or where you are just trying to make the best of your existing space – can be summed up as 'the three Cs': communication, consultation, collaboration. Whoever is heading the project must ensure that all three happen.

This process by which a learning space is developed is as important to get right as its location and what goes inside it. Who helps to make the decisions and how those decisions are made determine the kind of space you will end up with. If the education team is not properly involved in this, the odds are you will not get the space you want – nor the fittings, furnishing and equipment you need to run successful programmes.

'Make sure you and your entire team, and potential users of the space, are involved ... Ensure that directors are clear about who the space is for – is it likely to get overshadowed by the need to bring in revenue and be used for corporate hire/events?' *Museum Educator, Anon*

Forming a project team

Whatever the type or size of project, form a 'project team' – even if it is just you and a colleague. This enables you to share ideas and responsibilities, and sends the message that you mean business. The more ambitious the project, the larger the team; and in a listed building, the team should include a conservation officer. The head of education should always have a central role in any team's decision-making process.

With a new build or major refurbishment, the team should appoint a project champion or leader to:

- act as the main conduit for all information and documentation between architect(s) and the site
- establish and manage effective liaison and consultation internally, including with building and conservation staff

- manage the different lines of decision-making with external bodies such as trustees, owners and funders
- maintain continuity throughout the project, especially in the light of staff changes
- agree timetables that suit the demands on the staff as well as the architects
- ensure that the different teams on the site, such as education or curatorial staff, have access to and can negotiate on those elements of the development that directly affect their work

The project team should itself reflect the three Cs, as well as setting up straightforward and transparent arrangements for keeping all staff up to date, having consultation sessions at key points, and ensuring that staff work together rather than in isolation. The project leader's role will sometimes be that of a referee ensuring fair play and bringing new players on to the field.

At one site, different teams (such as education and visitor services) were asked to specify what they wanted in terms of spaces and what should be in them. Drawings and descriptions were circulated for comment and amendment at the two key stages of applying for planning permission and agreeing the detailed designs. The teams were also brought in to discuss specific aspects of the development that affected their future work.

No team can embrace all the professional and practical know-how that is required to create a successful learning space. The project team, and the different teams, should therefore draw on the knowledge, experience and expertise of particular individuals either internally or from outside. It might be a good idea to establish sub-groups to research and develop specific aspects of the space, like access.

As emphasised above, it is vital to consult with the users of the learning space, and of the site as a whole. The education team should ensure that its actual and potential users are consulted in some effective way: this includes children and young people. Look for ways to do this based on practical involvement in developing the space. For example, children can help to work out whether the proposed space is the right size for the numbers and activities envisaged. One site got each education team member to act as an advocate for the different audiences it served, and consulted informally with local contacts and community networks.

The stronger the team, the more you will be able to question and propose on equal terms with other senior management, architect(s) and contractor(s). That will help you to steer the direction of the new space according to your imperatives rather than be driven by theirs.

'... the devil is always in the detail and ... that requires a much more collaborative approach.' *Paul Mainds, Chief Executive, The River & Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames*

Get involved

Whatever the scope of the project – from rethink to new build – carry out these three tasks:

Check out the building: If you are working in an historic, listed building with a management plan, do you know the implications for the siting, size or fitting-out of the kind of learning space you want? Talk to buildings and conservation staff.

Agree on whom the space is for: For example, is it for a broad range of users, for specific types of user, for the staff who work with them – or all three? This exercise will also help you to define what *you* mean by a successful space rather than what others – such as trustees, senior management, funders or architects – might mean.

Do the research: Visit other sites with learning spaces that interest you. Ask how they went about rethinking or refurbishing the space. With any new build, find out what other spaces the chosen architects have designed. Become familiar with the technical jargon and culture of architecture. Learn to read and interpret architectural drawings (see *Where to Find Out More*, p.46).

'We used a 3D model to test the logistics of the "get ins" and "get outs" of the number of groups visiting each day. This helped us plan the layout of furniture and understand the capacity of the spaces for different activities. 2D plans can be hard to follow and models can provide a more accessible and faster consultation format.' *Carolyn Roberts, Head of Education, Horniman Museum, London*

Changing circumstances

A key test for any project is how you respond when budgets are cut or problems arise over locations and dimensions. The clear and coherent framework established by the Horniman Museum is a useful model here, although the project team crucially did not include the head of education. They were able to cope with a 20% cut in the funding available for the Museum's redevelopment. Spaces were smaller but quality was maintained and a 'better building' resulted because of the team's ability to 'just think harder about what we really wanted and be more creative about the design'.

In such circumstances the value of the three Cs comes into play even more, because they allow teams to focus on the practical side of an enforced rethink – as at Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, where 'the education team met to discuss priorities. It was decided that access to water and a floor to be messy on were the essentials, and that the space could do without a fitted screen to separate it from the rest of the gallery'.

'Talking to people helped us build a vision of what it should look like and how it should be built.' *Dave Millis, Architect, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire*

'... the devil is always in the detail and ... that requires a much more collaborative approach.'

Paul Mainds, Chief Executive, River & Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames



Working with Architects

'When it came to briefing the architectural team, we knew what we wanted from the building but not what it might look like. That was the architects' job.' *John Rhymmer, Director, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire*

Architects may only be brought in for new-build projects and are not always involved in rethinking or refurbishing a learning space. When they are, the three Cs of communication, consultation and collaboration apply equally to them. The most successful new or refurbished learning spaces – whatever the size – have come about from a close understanding between client and architect of what is needed. That means talking and listening, as well as designing.

Where you do just have a space to rethink or reshape, and little money with which to make changes, you may well feel that some architectural or design advice or expertise would help. If so, this might come informally from within – for example, from the trustees, the site's friends, regular visitors, or local authority and other networks. (For guidance on how to find an architect, see CAFE's *Creating Excellent Buildings: A Guide for Clients in Where to Find Out More*, p.46.)

It is the individuals involved, and their ability to collaborate effectively, that determine the success of the client/architect relationship. This means understanding each other's approach and needs in terms of designing and fitting-out the space; and identifying and acknowledging gaps in expertise or knowledge of both client and architect.

When an architect is on board, your task is to decide what is needed and provide a 'starter brief' as a guide. The architect's task is to add value, and some magic, to that brief and to the eventual space. Your *joint* task is to come up with the final brief that will deliver what the client wants and the architect can design. In short, it is a two-way process. How can that be achieved? Four of our case studies in particular highlight how this process works: Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, the Horniman Museum, the River & Rowing Museum, and the Women's Library.

Our case studies show that it is best to have one person to act as the main link between staff and architects. Establish regular and straightforward ways for staff to consult together. How this is done depends on your site's culture and staffing structure, but bear in mind the following three crucial points:

- Do not to allow hierarchies to restrict the involvement of the education team in the consultation and decision-making processes – whatever the size of the project. Our work with a wide range of sites highlights that the head of education should always be part of the senior management team, and be seen as a key player in planning any learning space project
- Ensure that everyone is involved in the consultation process in ways that are effective, transparent and trusting
- Make certain that everyone understands what is being proposed. Explain technical terms and architectural drawings and jargon. Always say when you don't understand something. Finbarr Whooley, Horniman Museum's Head of Curatorial & Public Services, comments: 'One difficulty was interpreting complex drawings. So we always tried to ensure that they were understood. Even so, people sometimes didn't take things seriously until they saw it in reality. That didn't really happen with the education team because they crawled all over the plans!'

Don't expect architects to know everything about your learning activities and their requirements; insist on additional expertise being brought in where necessary. In some cases, the architect researches and develops the learning aspects of the new or refurbished space: such an approach can provide new insights into its location, shape and content. Paul Swart, architect for the redevelopment of the learning space in the River & Rowing Museum, says that experience in educational settings is vital:

'You need to have been through a few temporary classrooms and Primary school extensions to learn the nitty gritty ... there's not a lot of architecture in some of these things and you don't want to have it, in a way; you want to suit the children first.'

Your first job is to ensure that the right people talk to the architects. This is particularly important when those running a site are not commissioning the new building or space themselves. For example, Techniquet Director Colin Johnson explains: 'Realising they did not have the operational experience of such a centre, the Corporation [Cardiff Bay Development Corporation] told the architects that while they were the client in one sense, the functioning client was Techniquet. We had a series of meetings and brought in people to refine our mission and sat down with the architects and looked at the details and how to match the needs with the budget available.'

A vital ingredient, both for you and for any architect involved, is always to show commitment to the project. This helps to maintain momentum, sustain morale within the organisation, and cement the client/architect relationship.

'If you have an enthusiastic client, the building reflects that. If you get clients who don't know what they want, you have problems.' *Dave Millis, Architect, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire*

Some of the architects we spoke to listed the following key issues to consider when designing a new or refurbished learning space:

Developing the brief

- What activities do you want to carry out in the space?
- What effects will these have on the exhibition/display space?
- What is the best environment for these activities? Focus on the activities and avoid trying to cater for every possible option
- Do you want the learning space to be adjacent to or located within the display of artefacts? Consider the interest created by such a location, but also the potential risks to the artefacts (see *Location & Dimensions of the Space*, p.12).

Working together

- Ask the architect or project manager to write or adapt the brief based on your detailed requirements
- Refine and agree the final brief together
- Appoint a 'project champion' – someone who has the passion and energy to drive the project forward
- Build in a mechanism for reinvigorating the process – have set-date periodic reviews
- Revisit and amend aspirations to ensure that the project is achievable; this will help keep people focused
- Maintain and support the involvement of those who will use and manage the space
- Ask the design team to be flexible and accountable; hold them to what is agreed
- Expect and allow for the growth or reduction of funds and ambition
- Trust in the relationship with the architect
- Respect the use of each other's time

The key question to address together throughout is: Will the learning space work the way you want it to?



1 & 5
The Horniman Museum
2
Bolton Museum & Art Gallery
3
Techniquet Science Discovery Centre
4
The Women's Library



Location & Dimensions of the Space

The first questions when rethinking a learning space are:

- Is it located in the right place?
- Is it the size we want?

If the answer is no in either or both cases, consider the possibility of relocating to a different space, or reshaping the existing one.

For a proposed new space, consider:

- Where should it be located?
- What size should it be?

To answer these questions, address – and consult on – such issues as:

- What do we want to do in the space?
- How many different types of activity do we want to offer?
- What areas do we want within the overall space (e.g. teaching and non-teaching, offices, toilets, reception area, lunch area)?
- How often will the space be used?
- How many children or adults do we want to cater for in a group?
- How many people will be involved overall?
- Based on the above, how much space do we need?

- Where do we want the space to be, in relation to other spaces in the site (e.g. exhibition areas, staff offices, café or shop, gardens or dedicated outdoor areas, toilet facilities if not exclusive to the learning space, main entrance or a separate entrance)?
- Do we want the space to be situated in a central, public and highly visible location?

The site as a whole has a huge influence on the location and dimensions of the learning space within it, in terms of its own geographical location, structure and shape. That influence extends to perceptions of learning in cultural sites. For example, the view that the whole site is a learning space may be valid but can also limit a site's thinking about what a dedicated learning space should be for and where it should be. This is another justification for having an educational presence at senior management level, and on any project team for developing such spaces.

At the same time, compromises have to be made for the simple reason that a fully flexible, useable space is so difficult to design or rethink because something is always at the expense of something else.

In addition, disadvantages relating to the location, structure and shape of the site as a whole can create problems for or limit the potential of any new learning spaces within it. This can be particularly challenging with a listed building where conservation issues need to be considered and where innovation and radical thinking may be required more than for a brand new site.

'Dimensions were controlled by the original building, as were the accessibility and location.'
Museum Educator, Anon

Related to this is the need to build flexibility into a space, in terms of types of use and future development.

The continuing adaptability of the building is due to the design and layout of spaces being carefully thought about at the start. (Extract from the Techniqest case study)

Such problems should be addressed collaboratively between education team and project team – and any architectural team – in order to deliver a space that adheres as closely as possible to the agreed brief. Taking the time to understand the issues of location and dimension, and being helped to appreciate these, can enable the education team to resolve many difficulties in acceptable ways.

Most learning spaces in non-national sites are located on the ground floor, with others tending to be either on the first floor or in the basement. National sites tend to favour basement locations for learning spaces. This can create problems of light levels as well as diminishing the visibility and status of education in the site. Each site must decide which floor best suits its own space. However, one crucial issue is accessibility. If a space is located above or below ground level, make sure there are lifts of a sufficient capacity to move people to and from that level quickly and easily.

Putting spaces together

Work out which areas need to be adjacent to one another. Decide if you want the learning space to be next to or within an exhibition or gallery area. For example, at the Lighthouse in Glasgow, the education offices are easily accessible from the Education Workshop space.

'Press for as much space as possible. Children, especially, are not second-class citizens and shouldn't be squeezed into a corner.'

Museum Educator, Anon



This allows education and technical support staff to readily interact with workshop participants. At the Women's Library in London's Whitechapel, the exhibition hall includes two education spaces, one enclosed within it and the other above on a mezzanine level. This enables workshop participants to move easily between their own work and the reference material.

Working out dimensions

Getting the dimensions of a space right is as important as determining the right location – and sometimes more so. The fundamental issue is to make sure you have enough space to cater for the group numbers you want, especially with Primary-age children. Our research for *Space for Learning*, and previously for *Space for Art*, suggests that the minimum space allocation per person should be 2.8m² – this is more than the DfES recommends for school spaces, but it is based on real experience in a range of sites. This space allocation means that for a class of 30 children, any space should be a minimum of 84m². Our survey of sites reveals that more than half are unhappy with the size of their learning spaces. The size of spaces identified in the survey ranged from as small as 7m², with an average size of 45m².

Architects, and even a site's own senior management, often fail to understand the space requirements for a class of 30 children. Consequently, many learning spaces can cater for only half that number. **One site spoke of the 'flawed logic' in the original plan of assuming that the learning spaces need only cater for half a class at a time.** This is a crucial issue and you should not agree a space's dimensions until you are satisfied that it is large enough for your needs; cost saving on space just generates additional costs in management and staffing.

Some architects appreciate the importance of sufficient space. Paul Swart, the architect redeveloping the River & Rowing Museum's learning space, observed lessons in action to see how children move around and use a space. Test this out yourself. Involve users and staff to check how many people can fit into the proposed space; move equipment and furniture in and around to see what is possible, and how much circulation space and accessibility you will have. Use chalk marks on the floor and draw circulation maps so that architects and senior managers can actually see how people work in and move around the defined space. If the space allocated is not going to work, use the evidence from your 'test run' to justify and press for more space.

'Ideas for the design came from seeing what [the children] do and how they move through and around a building; how they use their eyes and senses.'
Dave Millis, Architect, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire

Whatever size you have, or are allocated, consider the following:

- Opportunities for display
- Quality and level of available light
- Views outside the space
- Access to an outside space for activities and/or lunch area
- Ready access to basic services
- Level of external noise
- Easy access to toilets and potential lunch area
- Easy or dedicated access from the street
- Accessibility out of hours
- Opportunities for flexibility, adaptability and expansion
- Maximum number likely to use the space in a single session and over a year
- Amount of specialist equipment or furniture required

- Range of activities and type of work to be offered
- Amount of storage required for equipment, materials, and users' work
- Whether you need separate spaces for different purposes, e.g. dark room, or a handling area for valuable artefacts

Check out what is possible within the allocated space. For example:

- Will every part of the learning space be accessible to all?
- How many people can work in it comfortably at the same time?
- How difficult will it be to move around in the space?
- What equipment and furniture can be accommodated within the space?
- Which activities can be run, and which cannot?
- How quickly will staff and users get a sense of how the space works?
- Will you have enough education and support staff to service the space?



'Ideas for the design came from seeing what [the children] do and how they move through and around a building; how they use their eyes and senses.'
Dave Millis, Architect, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire



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The River & Rowing Museum | |



Planning for the Future

Whether your project is to rethink, refurbish or build a learning space, it is essential that you explore – from the very start – how you might incorporate the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and/or demand. You need to be able to do this quickly, economically and successfully when the time comes.

In planning for the future, your first steps should be to:

- rethink or locate the space with the possibility of future extension in mind
- install electricity, water and other services with the option to 'open up' those services at any feasible point within the space, and even beyond it, through comprehensive wiring, trunking and piping
- where possible, use fittings, furniture, equipment and materials which can be reused or resited in any expansion or reorganisation of the learning space

The River & Rowing Museum found that after just five years with a new learning space, demand meant that a second space was required. The education team, other Museum staff and architect are engaged in 'healthy debates' about what they want to do and why. They are drawing on the mistakes as well as the successes of the first development, and focusing on an attention to detail which has only come from understanding and learning from the previous development process.

Planning for the future also means learning from experience. For example:

- What hasn't worked?
- Where are there gaps in facilities?
- Are there aspects of the learning space that do not suit specific groups?
- Are there barriers to supporting particular learning styles?
- Is the space unable to deliver new educational or cultural policies?
- Are there opportunities for expansion?

Because of its location, Techniquest has an inbuilt inflexibility: any redevelopment can only be upwards on top of the existing building. This has implications for the uses that can be made of higher floors in terms of education and exhibition space. However, the building has evolved and changed internally by rethinking spaces that are not working, agreeing a set of priorities for the use of spaces, establishing good organisation, and having knowledgeable, collaborative and watchful staff. This does not fulfil all future needs but it enables the site to progress rather than stagnate.

Site staff, education teams, funders and architects need to research and agree how best to design and equip learning spaces to meet the three challenges of:

- adapting to a site's developing vision and programmes
 - catering for technological advances
 - responding to new trends in educational and interpretative thinking
- More specifically, sites might consider how to respond to:
- support for diverse learning styles
 - new developments by institutions and sites as a whole
 - extending and improving the quality and variety of activities that can be offered
 - enlarging and redeveloping learning spaces and their facilities
 - making the site more accessible and relevant to a wider range of people
 - advances in e-learning and digital technology
 - developments across particular learning phases, including lifelong learning
 - government strategies and policies for the cultural sector, e.g. *Inspiring Learning for All* and *Culture Online*
 - government funding linked to specific social or educational strategies

Institutions themselves change in terms of what they do and whom they see as their users. This can lead to any built-in flexibility and multi-use having a limit or 'break point' because of the complex organisation required, the subsequent unsuitability of spaces for newly required activities, and a loss of clarity about just what a space is for.

For example, the Women's Library is facing such challenges head-on, with new alliances being forged between those staff not in at the beginning and the original architects. **Understanding what is happening and why can enable a site to address effectively the tensions and complexities of a brief that continues to evolve and to be rethought long after the building is complete.** Significantly, this can often be done for little cost and with only minor upheaval. It requires a fresh and critical look at a learning space, identifying and realising its potential.



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Bolton Museum & Art Gallery

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The Lighthouse

4
@Bristol

6
The Women's Library

7
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum



New Technologies

Consider whether to invest in new technologies for your learning space. Ask the following questions:

- Why do we want it?
- Is it essential to our vision and our programmes?
- Will we receive ready and sufficient technical assistance?
- Will we be able to match or surpass what schools can offer?
- Will we be able to upgrade regularly?
- Will it help us to make better use of our resources?
- Can we afford it in terms of initial installation, running costs, and upgrading?

Despite numerous government initiatives, access to ICT remains restricted across museums and other cultural and environmental sites, according to our surveys in 2002 and 2003. Most sites say that access is poor, and 15% of non-nationals have no access at all. Some sites want it but cannot afford it.

The education staff would very much like to be able to provide computers and Internet access, but this is an area where facilities in the Museum as a whole are severely limited – the education team have a joint email address and Internet access from only one computer. (Extract from the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum case study)

Other sites have decided that ICT does not suit the work they do, nor the vision they have for their learning space.

However, some sites do build an ICT or e-learning requirement into the design and fitting-out brief for a new space, or ensure that the space is wired up for potential future development. The Technquest science centre finds that technological improvements are making it easier, in practical or building terms, to upgrade infrastructure and facilities. Everything is getting smaller.

When deciding on the provision of technologies which support teaching and learning – including televisions, videos, whiteboards and plasma screens – it is vital to ensure that the location of the equipment in a space does not restrict use for other learning activities. Equipment needs to be used as flexibly as possible, but always bearing in mind the need for security.

Those with limited resources often install only a modest level of facilities or put off going down the ICT route altogether. They argue that it is wiser to focus on what the site can offer that is different or unique rather than compete, largely unsuccessfully, with schools. One head of education explains that 'it is handling objects that is important because you can do that here but not in the classroom'.

Others, like Bishops Wood, consider that it is better to use new technologies to reach beyond the learning space itself – to provide preparation opportunities before visits, and continuing resources for learners through weblinks and downloadable materials.

The science centre @Bristol sees part of its future as extending interactive opportunities internally, and developing more sophisticated links between the centre and learning individuals and groups in schools and elsewhere through broadband technology, video webcasting and conferencing.

Where to start

When planning for new technologies, consider the following:

- How compatible is your building with new technology installation and use? Identify any problems with the building's structure

Access to the Internet is limited by the structure of the building, which has exposed concrete ceilings and no grids or holes for cables. (Extract from the River & Rowing Museum case study)

- What arrangements best suit you and your users? Consult users as well as staff and ICT experts
- Do you have sufficient space for what you want? Assess the space required for your needs and the options available for installation
- Can you afford the type and level of facilities that will deliver what you want? Decide the type and amount of equipment and networks you want, e.g. monitors, laptops, broadband or wireless facility, whiteboards, scanners, colour printers, and software. Acquire estimates of the costs involved in constructing or refurbishing an ICT space, buying the equipment, installing and maintaining it

- Does your space allow for adaptability and future change? Plan the infrastructure, such as building design, whole site networking, and trunking routes, to allow for spare capacity and the opportunity to extend and upgrade facilities

- Do you want a separate ICT suite or integration with the learning space? Discuss why, and where, you want ICT facilities

- Would you prefer the mobility and flexibility of laptops? Assess the need for and extent of security measures

The property manager was previously facilities manager in a large Secondary school and knew from experience the need to over-specify in terms of cabling by 400%. (Extract from the River & Rowing Museum case study)

The Lighthouse incorporated new technologies into its Education Workshop from the start. The brief required a multi-functional facility for hands-on learning, e-learning and reflective learning. The result is a large, rectangular room with high windows along one side providing good natural light. It can accommodate up to 60 school-aged students. A bench runs along the length of the windows to house Apple Mac computers. An overhead power track and wall-mounted sockets ensure that computers and electrical equipment can be used flexibly in the space. The space has coped with the growth of computer-based work well beyond the original plans four years ago. An increase in computers in the Workshop has been supplemented by a mobile computer trolley housing ten i-books.



The property manager was previously facilities manager in a large Secondary school and knew from experience the need to over-specify in terms of cabling by 400%.

Extract from the River & Rowing Museum case study

'When classes come here ... they're not here to look at a computer, they want to see the real thing.'

David Blair, Freelance Educator, Bolton Museum & Art Gallery



Fittings, Furniture & Equipment

The process of 'fitting out' any learning space – rethought, refurbished or new – is as crucial as its location and dimensions. The fit-out can determine the type and extent of activities you can offer, and make all the difference between an agreeable and manageable working environment and one that just makes life hard.

'Fitting out' involves choosing the right sort of furniture, fittings and equipment for your specific needs and those of your various users, and at a price that suits your budget – from sinks to chairs and tables, floor coverings to blinds, power points to what you plug into them.

The wall opposite the windows is fitted with full-length wooden cupboards used for storing tables, school bags, and art & design resources. The wood is solid and well finished. The sink area was made to order, by a firm specialising in fittings for prisons, constructed of industrial stainless steel housing two sinks, one 'child height' and the other for adults. There are large steel cupboards on either side of the sink and kitchen-style cupboards above. (Extract from the Lighthouse case study)

It comes down to five basic decisions: what to have, what type to have, how many to have, how much to spend, and where to locate them. Attention to detail is at the heart of effective fitting-out: it requires good research, effective consultation, learning from experience – yours and others' – and, wherever possible, testing things out before you make a decision.

This education space houses stools and mini-tables which can be set up to create one long rectangular table, or rearranged into small clusters of tables. (Extract from the Bolton Museum & Art Gallery case study)

There should be a parity of quality between the learning space and the rest of the site. Fittings, furniture and equipment should look good while being hard-wearing, compatible with different types of user, readily accessible, moveable and storable (where appropriate), easily and inexpensively maintained and replaceable, and all falling within your chosen or allocated budget. This can be a tall order if the needs of one type of user conflict with those of another.

This is the area of developing a learning space where compromises are most often made. The more you know about all the aspects of fitting-out and the materials and products involved, and the more detail you can include in the original brief, the more likely you are to get what you need. In addition, you will be better able to assess where a compromise can be made without jeopardising the effectiveness of the working environment.

The quality of furniture is high; less so the fittings. A compromise was made between the fittings and keeping within budget or using the money for other things. (Extract from the Techniquest case study)

The watchword is practicality. For example, decide what will work best in the circumstances of your space. Remember that you are equipping what will be a hard-working environment. Assess the need for robustness alongside that of high-quality design and materials, and what other essentials might be purchased for the cost of a top-quality product. Always consider the IKEA factor. Also bear in mind that in creating a flexible space, you do not want it to be anonymous; the space should impart a sense of place and give a sense of the identity of the site.

Consulting others and reaching decisions

'It is imperative that people liaise with the user groups and audiences they wish to attract. Museums cannot think they know what people want without asking them.' *Museum Educator, Anon*

However modest the project, consult with staff and the range of users to compile a list of what you need. For example, surveys of pupils reveal that their ideal space should include comfortable seating and tables at the right height for them. A learning space that caters for a wide range of age groups may have to opt for a one-height-fits-all approach for such furniture as tables and benches, for both sitting and standing work. Such decisions benefit from wide discussion and testing different heights with various users and those working with them. Such a process can lead to one of those acceptable compromises.



'It is imperative that people liaise with the user groups and audiences they wish to attract. Museums cannot think they know what people want without asking them.'

Museum Educator, Anon



'Make sure that you do plenty of research at other institutions. Ensure that you are involved in every stage of the design and fitting-out process.'

Education Officer, Big Pit, National Mining Museum of Wales, South Wales



'Make sure that you do plenty of research at other institutions. Ensure that you are involved in every stage of the design and fitting-out process.'
Education Officer, Big Pit, National Mining Museum of Wales, South Wales

When involved in a new build, work closely with the project manager, architects and contractors. It can sometimes be difficult to make sure you are part of a decision-making process that often becomes *ad hoc* and individual as contractor or architect marks out what they may consider their own professional territory. By the fitting-out stage, you should already have developed an effective working relationship with the architect, who should know by now that you are not going to go away and who should be impressed by your tenacity, attention to detail, and knowledge of the issues and products. None the less, always consider the architect's or contractor's advice and suggestions – and always ask for their advice when you are uncertain.

'The architect listened to us and mostly did what we wanted. We had to fight for a few things.'
Angela Roostan, Operations Manager, Techniquest, Cardiff

Be especially firm about getting the type of, and location for, sinks, power points, tables and chairs that are right for *your* needs. Blackout facilities are a priority, but are often overlooked; this is something that should be incorporated into the original design rather than left until the fitting-out stage. For example, one architect omitted the agreed plan for blackout when he decided that it spoil the architectural vision of the space as a whole.

Health & safety

Some decisions about fitting-out will be determined by health & safety regulations or concerns. When such concerns are raised, always discuss the issues involved and negotiate possible solutions, rather than be intimidated by them. Ensure that the concerns are valid, and look for solutions that do not jeopardise the effective running of the space.

Safety concerns required less than compatible fire doors. The stained glass of the Education Room doors had to be reinforced between two sheets of strong clear glass. But 'we did get very expensive non-reflective glass which would not break and did not compromise the colour of the stained glass.' (Extract from the Bagshaw Museum case study)

Sourcing

Be closely involved in the sourcing of fittings, furniture and equipment: find out for yourself what works, through research, consultation and experience. This is a major factor in achieving a successful learning space. The Horniman Museum devised a successful process by which education and facilities teams made decisions together. Often, however, the teams were asked to state their requirements but were not involved in the selection or purchasing process. This led to too-heavy sliding doors; cupboard shutters that are hard to operate, and catch fingers because of too little space between shelf edge and shutter; ropes for working blinds that children love to play with; and hi-tech soap dispensers that cannot cope with children's endless fascination with new things. In short, high quality should not lead to over-sophistication.

Consider your organisation's commitment to sustainable development. Are you committed, wherever possible, to sourcing locally produced resources made from sustainable sources, or to supporting local craftspeople?

Ensure also that you can source replacement parts easily and inexpensively. This is another reason for seeking local suppliers wherever possible – or, when your main users are children, for consulting those experienced in dealing with schools' needs.



'Look for simple, straightforward solutions when fitting-out heavily used areas, and always test things out first.'

Barbara Alcaraz, Deputy Facilities Manager, Horniman Museum, London



1,2,3,4 & 9
 The River & Rowing Museum
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 The Horniman Museum
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 The Lighthouse

Services

The services you use, where they are situated in the space, and the methods by which they are delivered, depend on the kind of site or institution you are, the location of the learning space, the range of activities you want to offer, and the number of visitors to be catered for. Health & safety regulations cover the installation of services generally and for learning spaces. However, there is more to consider than the basic rules.

One factor is to provide services in environmentally benign ways. This includes arrangements for energy, water and waste.

'We wanted, and got, a building that demonstrates best practice in terms of sustainability and enables people to see what that best practice is.'

John Rhymer, Director, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire

The heritage status of a site, and the kind of artefacts on display or stored, also influences the type, use and location of services. Our case studies show that workable compromises can be reached between the need to protect buildings (particularly historic buildings) or displays, and the need to ensure that a learning space is properly equipped. For example, Bolton Museum & Art Gallery located its learning space within a gallery but installed stopcocks under the sinks to turn off the water and keep the cupboards locked when not in use. The Women's Library has a passively controlled environment system rather than air-conditioning, which as an additional benefit reduces heating costs as well as environmental damage by 80%.

General issues to consider include:

- Activities going on in the space
- Number of people involved in sessions
- Best locations for each service
- Convenience in relation to other fittings, furniture and equipment
- Health & safety

- Number and size of each service point, e.g. sinks, power points, lights
- Types of energy sources and methods of installation
- Potential to adjust, extend and relocate
- Cost and ease of maintenance

Consider also:

Water

- The need for hot and cold water
- Precautions to avoid flooding

Electricity

- The equipment needing electricity
- Where to locate power points, e.g. floor, worktop and/or ceiling level, and flexible points to be moved around the space

Lighting

- The balance between natural and artificial lighting
- The impact of natural light on the space, such as location, extent, dimensions and type of glazing, potential glare, and the need for blinds
- The type of lighting you need, such as ceiling lights, table lamps, directional lighting, and dimming options
- The need for effective blackout facilities

Sinks

According to our survey, two-thirds of respondents said that provision of sinks is poor or no more than adequate. This remains a serious problem, and one that could easily be avoided – if only architects, contractors and project teams acted on the stated requirements of those who run learning spaces. Always research the size, type and number of sinks you need, where to locate them and the heights at which you want them. Ensure that the plumbing system can cope with the disposal of the waste products your activities will create. Our case-study sites have identified that standard drain fittings are not robust enough to deal with paints, sand and similar materials; these need a wide-bore drain and filters.

Temperature control & ventilation

The temperature and ventilation of a learning space are determined by such factors as the number of external walls, extent and type of glazing, ceiling height, and the type and location of heating systems installed. A further consideration is whether the materials or equipment used for activities in the space produce dust, fumes or heat. This includes ICT equipment, which can increase the temperature in an enclosed space. Some sites, such as archives and museums, have special requirements because of the artefacts on display or in storage.

DFES regulations set out minimum requirements for temperature and ventilation control in schools, and these should be applied to learning spaces in other settings. For example, a classroom should maintain a minimum temperature of 18°C (64.4°F).

Location can be a significant factor. For example, underground spaces seem to be popular with some architects and directors but are often reported to feel oppressive, airless, and enervating.

Consider the following:

- The impact of both natural and artificial lighting on the space
- The heating system to be installed in the space, especially its efficiency and ease of control
- Activities requiring ventilation to control dust, heat or fumes
- The benefits of access to fresh air, and whether you want to be able to open windows
- Whether windows require blinds – both to cut out glare and to enable the use of TV/AV equipment

Toilets

The key issues about toilets are:

- Where they are sited. Can they be exclusively for those using the learning space, thereby addressing child protection issues?
- How they are fitted-out. Can they be wholly or partly designed and fitted-out specifically for children?

- How many to install. Will they be used regularly through the day or only for a short span of time? Will they cope with the short periods of heavy use, e.g. 40 children in the space of a 15-minute break?

Cost will determine some of the answers. Few sites say they can afford, in terms of cost and space, toilet facilities exclusively for children, although this was obviously a priority at Eureka! The Museum for Children in Halifax, which has frequently won 'Loo of the Year' awards. Some sites have them exclusively for everyone using the self-contained education centre. Bagshaw Museum has had to make the toilet facilities accessible to all Museum visitors, and has installed CCTV as a child protection measure.

Fittings can be a mix of adult and child level, or accessible to both – such as a single trough urinal for males, rather than individual stalls. The main concerns are that the facilities should be well designed, robust, readily accessible, easy and inexpensive to maintain, child-friendly and safe. There should always be accessible toilets for users with a physical disability.

Acoustics

What you can do in a space can be limited by the quality of sound-proofing and acoustics. Some sites build both into the design and fitting-out; others accept a certain level of sound leakage, organising sessions so that a noisy activity does not clash with a quiet one next door; and some enjoy the 'inevitable' hub-bub of a lively and successful learning space.

Sound quality is vital, so consider:

- Shape and size of the space, including ceiling height
- Materials used in construction or fitting-out, e.g. glass walls
- Furnishings and equipment in the space
- Number of people who work in the space
- Type and variety of activities they will do
- Intrusion of noise from elsewhere in the site or outside it

Always test the effectiveness of sound-proofing or acoustic fittings or design.



'We wanted, and got, a building that demonstrates best practice in terms of sustainability and enables people to see what that best practice is.'

John Rhymer, Director, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire



Costs

The project's budget will determine the location and size of a learning space, as well as the type, extent and quality of the fittings, furniture and equipment. But always remember that, whether you have a large budget or no budget at all to speak of, your project is important and should be planned carefully and in detail.

Whatever the project, three costs are likely to be involved:

- Research and consultancy costs to establish the right space and fitting-out for your needs
- The cost of equipping the space, such as furniture, fittings and equipment
- The costs involved in running or maintaining the space

If building work is involved, add in the capital cost of building or renovating the space, including professional fees and some contingency funds, however small.

There is also the 'hidden' cost of staff time for those involved in the project, such as that spent on research, meetings, reading drawings and documents, and visiting other institutions and sites.

The financial cost of a learning space does not reflect the level of thought, commitment or innovation that goes into its development; its success at promoting learning and creativity; or its importance to the work of the site as a whole. For example, Dyrham Park's study centre cost just £360, which was spent on flexible storage units and lighting. That was sufficient to meet the specific needs of the education team and its programme, and the practicalities of the space available to be developed.

Whether a learning space costs half a million or just a few hundred pounds, the issues are the same:

- Clarify uncertainties or gaps in the budget for the learning space
- Involve someone in the team who understands costings and balance sheets
- Be prepared to negotiate for what you want, and renegotiate any unsatisfactory allocation of funds
- Establish a quality standard for materials used, and for the furniture, fittings and equipment to be bought
- Compare different materials, furniture, fittings and equipment before making a choice
- Estimate running costs for the space in terms of services, materials, and day-to-day maintenance

- Be realistic about what you can afford
- When necessary, assess the implications of a smaller space, a less favourable location, a lower level of fitting-out, or a reduction in the type of activities in the space – then decide where cuts might be made
- Devise a future timetable for buying what cannot be afforded in the initial fit-out

At times, you will have to compromise on costs. Reassess your needs and establish and negotiate for what is an acceptable compromise for your particular site and the activities you plan.

Building something new to match the high standards of the original stone building would be expensive. 'We ... needed to put something down on paper to get some idea of costs, and to start applying for grants.' (Extract from the Bagshaw Museum case study)

When the Horniman Museum staff had their budget cut by 20%, they opted for smaller spaces rather than lower quality. When Bolton Museum & Art Gallery learned that a reduced amount had been awarded for their project, the education team met to discuss priorities.

In deciding priorities – and to keep within budget – Techniquest Science Discovery Centre opted to focus more on the quality of furniture than on fittings. Director Colin Johnson explains: 'There was a cost within which the project had to be achieved. The overall standard of fittings, such as lights and doors, is not good. But the quality of the envelope and the ambience, style and feel are brilliant.'

Always ask three questions when deciding on costs:

- What is essential and cannot be compromised on?
- What can be set aside or abandoned without jeopardising your priorities or principles?
- What can be introduced or reinstated in the future?

'There was a cost within which the project had to be achieved. The overall standard of fittings, such as lights and doors, is not good. But the quality of the envelope and the ambience, style and feel are brilliant.'

Colin Johnson, Director, Techniquest Science Discovery Centre



- 1 & 3
The River & Rowing Museum
- 2
Bolton Museum & Art Gallery
- 4, 5 & 6
Techniquest Science Discovery Centre



Storage & Display

'We have odd-shaped equipment which does not fit easily into drawers and cupboards – even though our storage space was quite considerable.'
John Rhymmer, Director, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire

Storage – and, to a lesser extent, display space – remains one of the most problematic areas in developing and running learning spaces. A common refrain is that 'there is never enough storage space'. The main issues to consider are the items and materials that need to be stored, the amount and type of storage required, and where to locate it around the learning space.

Storage may seem an unexciting aspect of planning a learning space, but the consequences of inadequate storage facilities can have a detrimental effect on the work of the education team. Spaces can quickly become overcrowded and untidy; some activities may be curtailed when materials or equipment are unavailable because they cannot be stored anywhere.

Significantly, our survey of museums and other sites found that over three-quarters of respondents are not satisfied with their storage space for works, resources and materials.

Order, neatness, clear worktops and accessibility are some of the essential ingredients of a successful storage policy. Some venues, like Bagshaw Museum, hide storage space behind cupboard doors or 'fat' walls. How, therefore, can you identify and acquire the kind of storage facilities that will make your space work well?

Establish your storage requirements

General considerations include:

- The type and frequency of the activities you offer
- The number and age range of the children, young people or adults involved
- Fire and health & safety regulations
- Your future needs (see *Planning for the Future*, p.14)

Consult with staff and users to help you answer five key questions:

1. What items do you need to store?
2. Which items are used regularly and which stored long-term?
3. How might this affect the location of storage?
4. What capacity should the various types of storage have for the size, shape and weight of equipment and materials you use?

5. How much secure or lockable storage do you need?

Check that you will have storage capability for:

- materials, tools and equipment (e.g. *interactives, paper, paint, pens, pencils, brushes, clay, fabric, glazes, plaster, stone, wood, OHPs, monitors, television, video*)
- reference material (e.g. *books, magazines, slides, CD-Roms, tapes, prints, models, and 'found' items for stimulus and still-life work*)
- the work being produced (e.g. *written/ art work, sketchbooks, models*)
- people's belongings (e.g. *bags, coats, lunch boxes, teachers' and gallery educators' personal items*)

Storage must be capable of holding 3D objects (stimulus or works created in the space). A plan chest is the best thing for larger paper sizes. Standard kitchen units are popular in learning spaces, but check that they are strong and deep enough, and meet your particular needs. Other items needed might be hooks and trays.

Here is a checklist of things to do:

- Calculate how much space you need, based on the answers to the above questions, and on the DfES guidance for schools (see *Location & Dimensions of the Space*, p.12)
- Establish the budget to be allocated for creating storage
- Draw a plan of where you need the different kinds of storage to be located
- Consider what should be the right height, depth, and materials used for the different kinds of storage
- Check the accessibility of proposed storage spaces for every kind of user
- Consider ways in which storage might be 'hidden' behind doors or inside 'fat' walls
- Check what equipment and materials need to be stored on open shelves for easy accessibility
- Make sure you can keep different kinds of items separate in storage, e.g. paper supplies and cleaning equipment
- Consider how and where to store valuable artefacts for handling sessions/study collections
- Identify ways to create flexibility and adaptability in storage



- Assess such practicalities as the need to move heavy items around, e.g. using storage trolleys for accessibility and versatility
- Consider issues of visibility: what should be on show and accessible to make it clear what goes on in the space

Ask other people about their storage successes and failures, and test storage options to check what works best for you. What looks a good buy may not work well. Consult staff and users, and include them in the testing process. Look through up-to-date supplier catalogues and ask other people to recommend national and local suppliers.

Cupboard shutters that are hard to operate, and catch fingers because of too little space between shelf edge and shutter. (Extract from the Horniman Museum case study)

Storage facilities need to be within or adjacent to the learning space, and readily accessible. One learning space has to store equipment under the education room: it takes two members of maintenance staff to move the equipment each time. Often, useful storage in the learning space has been taken over for other needs, such as housing cleaners' materials or even part of the museum's collections.

Having done the research on what you need, what is available and the likely costs involved, discuss all this with colleagues – and, in the case of a refurbishment or new build, with the project manager, the architect, and (where relevant) the contractor. A continuing dialogue while you are doing the research is even better. Negotiate the best storage you can for your space. Insist that storage should look good and match the quality of the rest of the learning space, and the venue as a whole. At the same time, keep in mind that 'quality' does not need always mean 'expensive'.

At this stage:

- Consider carefully any suggestions for change and improvements made by colleagues, users, project leader and architect
- With a refurbishment or new build, keep in mind that architects may have different criteria for judging the location and type of storage. They may not be aware of the nature and extent of your storage needs: so be very detailed in specifying your requirements, and always check what they are proposing to install
- Make sure that what you, or others, are proposing is compatible with the location of other elements of the space, e.g. sinks, power points, circulation, and opportunities for display

- Check that the storage plans do not conflict with creating a light, open and airy space in which to work
- Establish what you are prepared to compromise on, and what you are not
- Remember that storage problems increase when a space is used for activities other than learning. For example, you may have to 'hide' equipment and materials when using a space for a formal lecture or corporate event
- Be ready to make alterations if you find the layout or type of storage can be improved once in use, when priorities change, or when more people are involved in the learning activities

Display

At the far end of the Workshop is a glass-walled room used for meetings or quiet study. The walls of the room – which look on to the Workshop space and out to the central area of the Education Centre – are constructed as transparent, cube-shaped display cases for art work created on site. (Extract from the Lighthouse case study)

Dedicated areas for display purposes are important for any learning space, but from our survey seem to be frequently overlooked. Just one in five sites consider their display space to be 'good'. Use the following guidelines to assess your display needs and the potential of your learning space for display:

- Consider the type, size, amount and location of display equipment needed
- Identify the best location for the display of, for example, artefacts, project work, drawings, models
- Do not sacrifice working space for display space – both are essential
- Ensure that the materials being used for the walls and floors of the space suit your display purposes and the hanging systems you want
- Check that the type and extent of material used for display purposes will not be regarded as a fire or health & safety hazard
- Try different options for display, e.g. wall-mounting using garden trellis
- Find ways to make displays visible beyond the learning space
- Identify locations for display in other parts of the venue, and outside it



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| 1,2,3,5,7 & 8
Horniman Museum | 9,10 & 11
Bolton Museum &
Art Gallery |
| 6
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The River & Rowing
Museum | 13
Ulster Folk &
Transport Museum |

Usage, Management & Maintenance

There is a clash between look and practicality. A combination of high levels of glass and a white finish makes it hard work to keep the building looking good. (Extract from the Techniquest case study)

A key factor in the success of a learning space is how well it can be used, managed and maintained. The space must be compatible with numerous physical and learning needs, and cope effectively with organising people of different ages engaged in diverse activities. It must be easy to keep clean and run efficiently, with repairs and replacements readily made. These matters can be determined by, and also help to determine, the location, dimensions and fitting-out of the space. They should be central in planning how to make better use of a space, and in any consultations with different user groups. Furthermore, they should be regularly assessed as the project progresses, especially when changes are being made to previously agreed plans.

Usage

Identify the different groups and individuals who will use the space – including staff. It may be that the site caters for specific ages because of the nature of its collections or archives; even so, try to build in some flexibility to enable the space to be accessible to and compatible with a wider range of user, in case the institution or its education team extends the reach of its work. Consider the following:

- Do the location and layout of the space suit different ages and physical abilities of all users?
- Are the fittings, furniture, equipment and materials used compatible with the range of users?

- Will all types of user be able to develop a familiarity with and feel 'ownership' of the space?

Management

Managing a learning space means managing the groups who visit the space, as well as the different types and levels of activity that take place there. To cope effectively with groups, you need to provide sufficient space for staff to meet and greet them; to be able to move them around without blockages; to ensure that there is a location for lunch; and to facilitate smooth exiting. Arrivals and departures are the times when toilet facilities are most heavily used.

- Assess the physical aspects of the space and site as a whole, such as corridors, stairs, toilet and cloakroom facilities, and refreshment areas in relation to the number and size of groups
- Ensure that there is adequate, prominent, and readable signage throughout the space and site as a whole
- Identify hidden areas that require extra monitoring or staffing to address child protection issues
- Fulfill the security requirements for the type and timing of activities
- Ensure that noisy events or spaces, such as a site's staffroom, are not scheduled or located adjacent to activities requiring quiet
- Allow sufficient turn-around time between events both to avoid congestion and to enable cleaning and other maintenance to be carried out

Cloakroom facilities and lunch areas

Cloakroom facilities and space for groups to have lunch are as much to do with management as with storage and fittings. Both remain a low priority with many senior managers and architects, and both cause many education teams considerable problems.

Our survey shows that two-thirds of sites have inadequate facilities for lunches. Secure provision (e.g. lockers) is rare, and our case studies show that cloakroom areas are often located along narrow corridors.

'[We] have a great team of attendant staff who help set up rooms, etc. Lack of lunch facilities and cloakroom space is crucial – it causes lots of problems and many lost bookings.' Education Officer, Portsmouth Museums

A key concern is that the learning space does not become a dumping ground for coats and lunches.

We have come across few examples of successful solutions to the lunch area/cloakroom dilemma apart from the large-scale and well-funded spaces in the British Museum and Natural History Museum (both in London), both of which work extremely well. That said, some smaller sites do resolve such issues satisfactorily. For example:

The nuts and bolts of a visit have become well organised. Staff meet the coaches and explain what will happen; coats and bags go into trolleys and are locked away safely. The reception area is open, airy and light. A decision was made not to put up pay barriers, to encourage the friendly atmosphere. Groups leave from a different exit so as not to clash with other groups arriving. (Extract from the Techniquest case study)

Maintenance

- Consult with the facilities team about ways and equipment to deliver an efficient and cost-effective cleaning and maintenance regime. This should not be an afterthought
- Install fittings, furniture, materials and equipment that are straightforward to maintain and renew. Furniture and equipment should, as far as possible, be easy to move and stack
- Consider the impact of inadequate storage on maintenance policy (see *Storage & Display*, p.20)
- Assess the costs of maintenance and monitor this once the space is in operation
- Ensure that there is sufficient staff available, and at key times, to clean and maintain the space regularly
- Avoid over-using the space to ensure that effective preparation for, and cleaning up after, sessions is not compromised

Floor coverings must be able to cope with heavy use and a range of activities, especially wet work. One venue reported problems with the linoleum 'rucking up'; others find it hard to maintain.

The floor covering is traditional lino which shows every mark; it has to be washed twice a day and treated with a coat of emulsion polish once a week ... in an education space, the floor covering should be vinyl with welded joints. (Extract from the River & Rowing Museum case study)

Bishops Wood Environmental Centre laid a linoleum floor made from sustainable sources of cork chips, linseed oil and jute. It wears well.

Mistakes are often made with the colour of the carpeting, with venues choosing pale or light colours; these are impractical in terms of cleaning, and readily show stains.



1 & 3
The Horniman Museum

2
Bishops Wood Environmental Centre

4
Bolton Museum & Art Gallery

'Make sure that you consider the maintenance aspects of the project. Don't let the designers give you long-term problems in this area. It may look good on day one ... but how easy will it be to maintain?'

Centre Manager, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Centre, Washington, Tyne & Wear

Adequate space for lunch is a chronic problem for most sites, particularly non-nationals, as is cloakroom provision. Whether lockers, hooks, cloakrooms, wheelie bins or crates are used, over half of sites regard such provision as poor.

