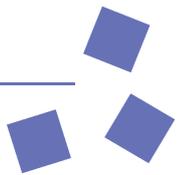


Case Captions Evaluation

Summary Report



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Prepared for:

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Museum of London is in the process of designing a new exhibition for the lower galleries that will span from 1666 to the present day. At several stages during development, Creative Research have conducted research to help guide decisions on the design of the exhibition. In May 2008 the Museum of London commissioned Creative Research to undertake an evaluation of the concept for the 'The City of London Gallery' and an evaluation of display case captions.

This is a report of the findings relating to the evaluation of case captions for three different display cases [Swinging London, Gun Power and Destruction], the report relating to the 'City of London Gallery' captions was submitted in June 2008.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the case captions evaluation was to:

- Test the Museum of London's proposed approach to case captions with adult and family visitors

More specifically, the objectives were to explore:

1. visitor response to the design and appearance of the caption rails and whether they inspire people to explore the content of the cases
2. visitor response to the position and height of the caption rail
3. whether visitors feel that the amount of information provided is appropriate – both overall and in relation to the individual objects
4. how easily visitors recognise the introductory text and its relative importance to their enjoyment and understanding of the display case
5. what visitors think of the text at the end of the caption rail that suggests they can find out more in the Sackler Hall and how they feel about this as opposed to finding out more on the spot

6. whether the type of information provided and the style / tone of writing is interesting, engaging and pitched at the right level
7. if the photographs on the caption rail work effectively as a means of identifying objects in the cases
8. how effectively the captions work with groups of objects when one or two photographs are provided of single objects on the caption rail – can visitors locate the groups of objects and can visitors locate the captions?
9. whether having objects in the display case that do not have a corresponding caption is confusing or presents a problem for visitors
10. how visitors (particularly families and children) respond to the children's caption
11. how visitors respond to the life story caption.

1.3 Research Method

Qualitative intercept interviews with visitors to the Museum of London were utilised for this research with adult and family groups. The views of children were captured by prompting and questioning the children who took part in the family group interviews where appropriate and observing how parents and their children reacted to the case captions and the corresponding displays.

The three display cases and correspondent captions were labelled (visitors were not told the case names, they were referred to as case A, B or C).

- Case A: Swinging London
- Case B: Gun Power
- Case C: Destruction

Visitors were approached in the main foyer and taken to a lower level of the Museum where the display cases and corresponding captions had been set up. The order in which visitor groups were taken to the display cases was rotated to ensure all cases were seen first by visitors some of the time. Case A was always seen either first or second because it was the largest case and there were a number of additional issues to

explore (the children’s caption and the life story). Moderators aimed to explore all three cases with visitors, but in a few instances only two cases were explored.

The interviews took place in the Museum of London from the 19th to the 21st of June (a Saturday was included to ensure family groups were represented in the sample). A full topic guide and rotation schedule is available in the appendix.

1.4 Sample

A total of 26 interviews were carried across the sample with 19 adults and 7 family groups. 13 interviews were with visitors from the UK or London and 13 with overseas visitors (see table 1 for sample structure)

Table 1: Interview sample

	UK / London	Overseas	Totals
Adult	8	11	19
Family	5	2	7
Totals	13	13	26

A total of 48 people took part in the interviews. Where interviews were with two or more people respondents were either friends or family (no interviews took place where visitors in the same interview did not know each other).

The gender breakdown was:

- 25 (52%) female
- 23 (48%) male

In terms of age the sample can be broken down as follows:

- 10 (21%) visitors were under the age of 16
- 7 (15%) were between the ages of 17 and 34
- 21 (44%) were between the ages of 35 and 54,
- and 10 (21%) were over the age of 55.

2 Conclusions and Recommendations

2.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of findings for each of the research objectives and recommendations, where appropriate.

2.2 Objectives

1. Visitor response to the design and appearance of the caption rails and whether they inspire people to explore the content of the cases

Overall, visitors responded positively to the design and appearance of the caption rails. They felt that the information provided on the captions would inspire them to continue to look at the objects (once they had read the information), particularly when this provided interesting details about the objects. Using pictures of the objects on the caption rail as the key did not discourage people from looking at the objects. All visitors maintained that they would still want to look at the objects in the display case.

2. Visitor response to the position and height of the caption rail

The overall response to the height and position of the caption rail on 'Swinging London' was positive. Although visitors were appreciative of the positioning of the 'Gun Power' caption (at the back of the case), a number felt that it (along with the case itself) was too low.¹ The caption rail at 'Destruction' was also perceived to be too low by most and a number commented how they needed to bend down to find the captions related to the objects and photographs on display.

Recommendation – The Museum should reconsider the height of the caption rail for 'Destruction', this, along with a number of other factors, meant people were more critical of this display. Both the caption rail and the display case for 'Gun Power' could be raised a little (this would also stop children climbing on the display case).

¹ The mock up 'Gun Power' case was positioned lower than the planned final display case will be in the lower gallery.

3. Whether visitors feel that the amount of information provided is appropriate – both overall and in relation to the individual objects

When considering the caption rails in their entirety, nearly all visitors considered the amount of information included to be 'just right'. It was only when discussing individual captions related to objects that a few (who were particularly interested in specific objects) felt that not enough information had been provided. Some did not think the provision of a title and date was enough information, particularly when they could see other objects had more explanatory information. There did seem to be an issue with the information provided about the six flint guns (Gun Power) – there was both too much (to be included together in one block of text) and too little (in terms of specific information about each of the guns from the perspective of those who were interested).

Recommendation – The Museum needs to balance visitors' need for information with the avoidance of caption rails that are too cluttered and overwhelming. The Museum should avoid large blocks of text and if there is a need to include more information, ensure this is spaced out along the caption rail. This approach could be taken to altering the information about the six flint guns, perhaps by spreading out the text and providing one line of information about each of the guns. The Museum might also want to re-think only providing the title and date for objects and perhaps include a line of contextual information. See also comments relating to objectives 5 and 9.

4. How easily visitors recognise the introductory text and its relative importance to their enjoyment and understanding of the display case

The introductory text was not always recognised by visitors and when it was, they were not always drawn to it initially. Even those who had read it (either before or after they had looked at a few objects) did not consider it prominent enough to attract attention. There were mixed views of the importance of reading the introductory text in terms of understanding of the case. Although some thought it was useful to provide the context, most felt people would understand what the displays were trying to achieve even if they did not read the introduction. Nobody thought that not reading the introduction would spoil an individual's enjoyment of the case.

Recommendation – The introductory text could be made more prominent on the caption rail, perhaps by highlighting it in a different colour and / or increasing the font size. The Museum might also want to consider linking the case number to the introductory text.

5. What visitors think of the text at the end of the caption rail that suggests they can find out more in the Sackler Hall and how they feel about this as opposed to finding out more on the spot

In the main visitors thought the text at the end of the caption rail that suggested they could ‘find out more’ referred to either the objects in the case or the wider theme of the case. There was some confusion from visitors who saw the caption at ‘Swinging London’ who thought it could refer to finding out more about ‘Daisy the Doll’. Some visitors felt the Museum should be more explicit in their wording and inclusion of the word ‘information’ was suggested as well as an indication of the format (literature, interactive, computer based etc) of the information. Visitor responses to caption positioning were mixed – some felt it was fine where it was, others thought it would be clearer by the introduction. Views were also mixed in terms of how people felt about going to Sackler Hall as opposed to finding out more on the spot, which suggested this depends on personal preferences.

Recommendation – The Museum should ensure visitors are clear about what this caption refers to (for example is it to find out more about the objects in the display, the themes around the case or both). As there were a number of comments from visitors that suggest people would like to know more about some of the objects on display, this is of key importance. Firstly, the Museum should ensure that the caption does not overlap with other captions to reduce the chance of confusion. Secondly, consideration should be given to the information visitors would need to have when they arrive at Sackler Hall - for example would they need to know the number of the display case or the name of the object they were interested in. It is essential that visitors know this before they go to Sackler Hall, otherwise if they arrive without the necessary details to access further information they are likely to get frustrated.

Thirdly, one option might be to link this caption to the case number and the introductory text as all three provide general information about the display case (whereas the caption labels relate to specific objects in the display).

6. Whether the type of information provided and the style / tone of writing is interesting, engaging and pitched at the right level

The extent to which visitors engaged with the information depended somewhat on their interest in the subject matter. All visitors engaged with the information they were interested in and commented that they had found it interesting. Nobody considered the information was boring or uninformative.

7. If the photographs on the caption rail work effectively as a means of identifying objects in the cases

The overall response from visitors to the use of pictures as a means of identifying the objects in the display cases was positive. This was particularly the case from those who were initially taken to 'Swinging London' or 'Gun Power' where visitors thought it could save them time (although at 'Gun Power' there was an issue with visitors recognising where the start of the caption for the six flint guns was). The response to the idea for 'Destruction' was not so positive and although visitors generally found the photographs in the display case and the information on the caption rail, they did not like the additional time it took them to do this. This (along with the low position of the caption rail) led to some visitors being quite dismissive of the idea and there were comments that a numerical method would have been more effective.

Recommendation – Although a few visitors suggested numbering the photographs and captions for 'Destruction', our interpretation is that the problems arose for a number of reasons:

1. The small size of the pictures made it difficult to link the captions and the photographs

2. The mismatch in orientation, where some pictures in portrait orientation were represented by pictures in landscape orientation on the caption rail and vice versa
3. The lack of alignment between the photographs in the display case and their corresponding captions on the rail
4. The position of the caption rail itself.

It was the combination of the above which led people to be critical and suggest alternatives (such as using a numerical method). If the Museum could resolve these issues, in our view the method would work as well as it did in the other two display cases.

8. How effectively the captions work with groups of objects when one or two photographs are provided of single objects on the caption rail – can visitors locate the groups of objects and can visitors locate the captions?

When objects were displayed in groups and visitors were asked either to find the caption or the objects they could easily do this. Some groupings of objects (the Mary Quant make-up) made more sense than others such as the Souvenirs of Swinging London. Views were mixed as to whether all items in the same caption group needed to be displayed together in the display case, some thought they should some were not worried. Some objects that were considered part of a group by the Museum (the postcards were considered part of the Souvenirs group) were not always perceived as such by visitors. Although visitors did not find it confusing that the group of guns were included in the same caption (in this case all six guns were shown on the caption rail) there was a feeling from some that more information about each of the guns would have been of value.

Recommendation – The Museum should ensure that the picture on the caption rail used to illustrate a group of objects is a prominent object in the group (such as the red nail varnish in the group of Mary Quant make-up). There would also be some merit in aligning any groups of objects with the information on the caption rail (where this is possible).

The Museum should ensure large blocks of text are not used to describe groups of objects – if there is a lot to say about them the Museum should think about separating the captions.

9. Whether having objects in the display case that do not have a corresponding caption is confusing or presents a problem for visitors

Visitors quickly realised that the yellow sling back shoes in the ‘Swinging London’ case did not have a corresponding caption. In contrast, when looking at ‘Destruction’, it was not always clear that some of the photographs did not have a caption. If a visitor was interested in a particular object or photograph the lack of a corresponding caption could prove frustrating. Indeed, at the outset of the interviews (when discussing the issue in general) visitors felt that all objects should have a corresponding caption and, if they did not, they might perceive that the Museum had made a mistake.

Recommendation – Ideally, the Museum should include captions for all objects that are included in the display that are not considered part of a group. Even if this is just a title and date it would be enough to ensure visitors understood that the Museum had not made a mistake on the caption rail. It also provides some reference (a title) for those who want to find out more about it in the Sackler Hall.

10. How visitors (particularly families and children) respond to the children’s caption

Generally, adults did not always recognise the caption as one that was aimed at children (adults in family group were more likely to notice this) although they recognised it was different. There were mixed views on the inclusion of the cartoon character and the omission of the picture of the object in the display (‘Daisy the doll’). Overall, visitors thought that the design should be more focused to attract the attention of children and make it explicit (without having to read the caption) that the intended audience was children. There were also comments from a few respondents that the amount of information might be too much for younger children.

Recommendation – The Museum should think about the design of this caption to make it stand out from the rest of the caption rail (as visitors appreciated it was a good idea). Ideally, the caption would include a picture of the object to which it refers. The amount of information displayed in the caption needs to take into account the ability of the child of whatever age group it is aimed at.

11. How visitors respond to the life story caption

Overall, visitors responded positively to the life story caption and most recognised it as a stand alone caption (although a number scanned the display for an object). Nearly all had heard of Twiggy and she was viewed as a suitable icon from the era of ‘Swinging London’. Although visitors were not critical of the caption as such a number did suggest an object in the display case might add value.

Recommendation – The Museum might want to think about adding an object (a larger photograph of Twiggy, possible from a fashion shoot or a magazine cover) in the display case. Although not essential (and not a key point of criticism), it is clear that for many visitors this would add to the caption and the display.

3 General Response to Case Captions

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by exploring visitor perceptions of their own behaviour when looking at display cases. We then go on to provide general feedback on the case captions including responses to use of pictures as the key to objects, caption design, the information provided and the amount of text on the caption rails. Finally, we report visitor behaviour and views in relation to the introductory section and going to Sackler Hall to ‘find out more’.

3.2 Visitor Perceptions of Objects and Case Captions

Before exploring visitor reactions to the case captions we asked a couple of questions related to their behavior when looking at similar displays containing objects and captions. When asked if they would look at objects then study the captions for those they found interesting, look at captions then find the objects for those they found interesting or a combination of both, most [19 out of 27], said they would look at the objects and then try to find out more about them. Just 1 out of 27 said they studied the captions and for those that looked interesting tried to find the objects they referred to, while 7 out of 27 did a combination of both. In terms of time spent looking at different aspects of the display, visitors were split in their perceptions of their behaviour. 12 out of 26 said they spent more time looking at the objects in the display, 11 out of 26 thought they spent an equal amount of time looking at the objects and reading the captions. Just 3 out of 26 said they spent more time looking at the captions.

Taking all of the above into account, it would seem that visitors place more emphasis on the objects than they do the case captions. However, when we asked the same visitors how important they thought it was that every object has a corresponding caption or label, most considered it important. Those that did not thought it would depend on the level of interest the individual had in the object and / or their closeness to the subject at hand – did they already consider themselves knowledgeable enough?

When asked how they would feel if they could not find a caption or label for an object they were particularly interested in, most commented that they would feel frustrated or annoyed. A couple would question why the object had been included in the display – if it was important enough to be displayed, why was it not important enough to be

explained? One or two thought they might view it as a mistake on the Museum's part - had they missed a caption out in error?

“Would be seen as a mistake by the Museum, [it] should have information otherwise it is just a random object.”

Adults interviewed as part of family group thought that to keep things simple for children to follow it would be most effective if every object had its own caption. This would ensure children could find everything they might look for.

3.3 Overall Response to the Three Display Cases

The overall response to the three cases was positive (regardless of which case was seen initially), although there were a few critical comments. Initial reactions to the individual cases were as follows:

- **Swinging London** – Nearly all visitors (particularly females) liked this case. They considered it interesting and colourful and some felt it was an area they could easily relate to (they had lived through the 60's). A couple thought the case was a little too busy and included too many objects and captions to easily take in.

“I can relate to this subject area more, it's colourful and it's pleasing to look at.”

- **Gun Power** – Visitors preferred this case in terms of object and caption alignment and a number initially commented on the clarity of the case design. There were few dislikes, one considered the display too traditional (and potentially un-engaging) and one thought it should be lit up more effectively to show the detail on the guns.

“Clear, because the pictures are laid out the same as the captions.”

- **Destruction** – The overall response to the subject matter was one of interest and visitors felt the material had been dealt with sympathetically, while emphasising the bleakness and devastation. This added to their understanding. The main criticism was the difficulty in linking the small pictures of the

photographs in the caption rail with the photographs in the display case (this is expanded on in section 5.4).

“Gives a good idea of destruction, shows what people in the world experienced.”

3.4 The Use of Pictures on the Caption Rails

3.4.1 General view

The overall response to the captions rails was positive; most visitors could see the value of using the pictures as the key for the objects on display. Those that liked the idea considered it:

- **interesting** – for some this was something they had not seen before and they thought it was unconventional in a positive way
- **potentially a way of saving time** - a few thought that the use of pictures on the ‘Swinging London’ caption rail could save time in finding the objects (the opposite was true for the ‘Destruction’ caption rail)
- **useful for young children and visitors from overseas** – a couple thought those without a good command of English would easily be able to link the objects and the captions (again these comments related to ‘Swinging London’ and not ‘Destruction’)

There were criticisms of the idea from the few who were not so keen in general and those that had issues with a particular case captions (mainly at ‘Destruction’). Reasons given by visitors for not liking the idea included:

- **a preference for a more traditional method** – one or two commented that they preferred the use of numbers in general and that the idea of using pictures was *‘trying to be too cool.’* One (avid visitor to museums) thought the idea ‘dumbed down’ the displays in general
- **potentially difficult for colour blind visitors** – one thought this would make linking the objects and captions in Swinging London difficult

- **captions and objects are not aligned** – some commented that in the ‘Swinging London’ and the ‘Destruction’ displays objects and captions were not aligned. A few (who seemed to prefer clearly ordered and aligned items) seemed particularly put off by this and sometimes continued to mention it throughout the interview.

Overall, visitors thought that they would still want to find the object even though they could see a photograph in the caption rail. In other words the photographs did not act as a substitute for the objects. At case A (‘Swinging London’) and case B (‘Gun Power’), people felt it was important to look at the actual artifacts and considered the picture on the caption rail as a reference point. Looking at the objects even when these were also pictures was still considered important at case C (‘Destruction’). The main reason given was that the corresponding picture on the caption rail was too small to see the detail.

“It’s like a quick reference, so we know we are looking at the right thing.”

Visitors were asked if they would spend more or less time looking at the objects in the display cases if there were no caption rails at all – they thought they would spend less time. Visitors reasoned that if there was nothing to tell them about the objects, the displays would be less engaging, it would be a case of *“that’s pretty and keep moving”*, in the words of one respondent.

3.4.2 Specific views related to each case

Responses to the use of pictures on the caption rail were more positive for ‘Swinging London’ and ‘Gun Power’ than those to ‘Destruction’. We have given an overview of the responses below and further details can be found in sections 3, 4 and 5, (‘Swinging London’, ‘Gun Power’ and ‘Destruction’ respectively):

- **Swinging London:** Visitors who were taken to this case first were particularly positive about the case captions. They linked the objects and captions easily due to the different types of objects in a variety of colours, which were easy to pick out on the caption rail.

“Pictures make it interesting and as they are in colour you can find them.”

- **Gun Power** – Visitors thought the idea of using pictures as the key also worked for this case. They reasoned the alignment of the captions and the objects and the small number of objects ensured the idea worked, rather than the individuality of the objects themselves.
- **Destruction** – The use of pictures for this case (when a number of the objects were black and white photographs) was less well received and a few questioned why a more traditional method of numbering the objects (particularly the photographs) had not been used for this case.

3.5 Caption Design

In the main, the design and layout of the captions was well received, particularly the simplicity of the caption rail for ‘Gun Power’.

Visitors considered that the size of the text was fine, although a few commented that older people might find it difficult particularly where the caption rails were low (‘Destruction’ and ‘Gun Power’). Having said this, none of the older visitors mentioned that they had trouble reading the captions. The pictures on the caption rail for ‘Destruction’ were considered to be too small (this is expanded on in section 5).

Adults and children who were interviewed as part of a family group also considered the layout and the size of the text to be suitable. One child demonstrated with ease that he could read the text when standing a few feet back.

3.6 Interest in Information

As might be expected, the extent to which visitors engaged with, and were interested in, the captions depended somewhat on their interest in the subject. A number of visitors make explicit comments about whether they were interested or not in the subject of the display cases. There was some indication that people found it more difficult to give specific comments on the captions if they were not particularly interested in the subject. They generally said the information is ‘okay’ and sometimes would add they were not really interested in guns, for example, and might not have spent much time looking at the display in ‘real life’. However, there were no comments that any of the information was uninteresting or boring.

There was a marked gender difference at cases A ('Swinging London') and B ('Gun Power'). Females (including female children) were more interested in 'Swinging London' while males (particularly male children) demonstrated more interest in 'Gun Power'. 'Destruction' interested both males and females and for this reason was probably the most widely appreciated of the three displays.

Overall, visitors considered that the information they had read was at the right level – nobody commented had any trouble understanding what was written. In all three cases, people felt that the information encouraged the visitor to look at the objects. One or two commented that although they would tend to look at the objects first and then read the captions, if the captions were interesting they would then look at the object in more detail.

A few were also able to elaborate on what they found particularly interesting in relation to the three displays as follows:

- **Swinging London** – one particularly liked the information about where the shoes were made and thought this would encourage people to study the shoes in more detail. Another was particularly interested in the Mary Quant dress.
- **Gun Power** – a few thought the information was effective in providing the context and one was positive about the 'stories' on the caption rail

"The level of detail and the stories on the captions is very good."

- **Destruction** – a few thought the captions provided a good (but not too detailed explanation) of the photographs on display. One thought the captions effectively illustrated a sense of the environment and chaos that would have been experienced.

"Captions give a good description and detail, there is a sense of the environment and chaos."

Overall, adults interviewed as part of family groups thought the information would be engaging for children (although they recognised that children would not read everything). They also mentioned that children sometimes need to be prompted into reading captions (a number of adults did this during the interview). One considered it

important to provide contextual information about the objects (where they were from, what they are made of etc.) in a ‘child friendly’ way to encourage children to be inquisitive and study the objects in detail.

3.7 Amount of Information Provided

Most visitors felt the amount of text displayed on the caption rails as a whole was ‘just right’ – there was enough to provide interesting information, but it would not overwhelm people. Just one or two commented that there was too much information and this was related to ‘Swinging London’ – where it was recognised this was due to the large number of objects on display. Two (avid museum visitors interviewed together) thought that there should be more information on the caption rails and reasoned that if people did not want to read everything they could ‘stop reading’.

In a general sense, visitors felt most of the captions explaining individual objects contained the right amount of information and reasoned that too much would put people off reading about the items on display.

“On the whole, it tells you what you need.”

There were a few comments related to instances of where either too little or too much information had been provided about specific objects for each of the three caption rails as follows:

- **Swinging London** – a couple noticed that only the title had been provided for the Mary Quant plastic boots (1966). Not only did this not provide enough explanation about the shoes, it was considered inconsistent with the rest of the captions (where at least some explanation was given). One thought there was too much information about the Mary Quant dress (1966), but this was more in relation to ‘freeing up space’ for information to be added about the shoes rather than a lack of interest the dress.
- **Gun Power** – A number picked up on the large block of text that explained the six flint guns (1685-1820). A few (with less interest in the guns) thought that this should be reduced – they reasoned that the large paragraph might put people off reading about the guns.

“There’s a lot of words and information to take in.”

- **Destruction** – This case received the least comments in terms of whether there was too little or too much information to explain the individual objects. There was just one comment from a child interviewed as part of a family group who questioned why there was no additional information about ‘casualty label c. 1940’ other than just the title and date.

Overall, visitors interviewed as part of family groups felt the amount of text, both overall and for each item was fine (and sufficient to provide interested children with information). Adults thought that the amount of detail families would want to go into at each display would depend both on how much time they had and what their children found interesting.

3.8 The Introduction

3.8.1 Extent to which people read the introduction

Most visitors read the introduction at some point when looking at the case. A few read it when they were first brought to the case, but most looked at some of the objects first, then read the introduction.

Those who did not read the introduction commented that it was not a natural reaction to look at the caption rail from the outset, confirming the responses to the behavioral questions at the start of the interview when most visitors said they looked at the objects first and then the caption rail. A few mentioned that once they had been primed to look at the introduction at the first case they looked at (by the moderator’s questions) they then looked for it when taken to the remaining display cases. In other words, if they know the information is accessible, they will take advantage of it. One or two thought that whether a person read the introduction or not would partly depend on where they were standing when they had approached the case. If the introduction was blocked by people they might not read or even notice it.

Those who did not read the introduction (as well as a number who did) did not think it was a particularly prominent aspect of the display (although they generally noticed it was in bold text). They felt that it was not immediately effective in attracting visitors’ attention.

3.8.2 Perceived purpose of the introduction

All agreed that the purpose of the introduction was to set the scene, provide the background / context or let people know what they might expect to find in the display case.

“Let’s you know what is happening in the case.”

“Sets the background, the idea of what’s going on socially.”

3.8.3 Perceived importance of reading the introduction

Visitor views were mixed in terms of the importance of reading the introduction to aid understanding of the contents of the display case. Adults (not in family groups) thought it would be important for children to read as they would be likely to ‘pick and choose’ the other captions they read and the introduction would provide a good overview. A few adults interviewed as part of a family group disagreed. They felt it would be more useful for children to ‘dive into the detail’ and look at the objects rather than spend time reading the contextual information.

In terms of their own understanding, most adults did not feel reading the introduction was necessary. A couple mentioned that because individual objects were clearly dated an understanding of the time period would come from the individual captions themselves. One or two considered it important that displays ‘speak for themselves’ rather than rely on the introduction to provide the context.

Nobody felt enjoyment of the objects and the display case in general would be compromised if an individual had not read the introduction.

3.9 Sackler Hall

On all three case captions there was a red box on the right hand side that provided a case number, and included the wording ‘to find out more go to the Sackler Hall’. On the ‘Destruction’ caption rail this label did not overlap any of the other captions, on the ‘Gun Power’ caption rail it overlapped slightly with the picture of the painting and on the ‘Swinging London’ caption rail it overlapped with the ‘Daisy the Doll’ caption aimed at children and families (both captions were also encased in a red border).

3.9.1 Case 25

When visitors were asked what 'case 25' referred to, at 'Gun Power' and 'Destruction' all thought it referred to the case as a whole. At 'Swinging London' there was some confusion and a few thought it referred to finding out more about 'Daisy the Doll'.

Although they recognised themselves that the label referred to the whole case, some thought that others would confuse it with the 'Daisy the Doll' caption. One questioned the logic of bordering both the 'Daisy the Doll' caption and the case label in the same colour (particularly as they overlapped). The adults in the family groups thought that children would not look at or notice the reference to the case number, but they did not think this would be an issue.

3.9.2 'To find out more'

There were mixed interpretations of 'to find out more' from visitors. Some thought it referred to the objects in the case, others suggested a wider theme, for example 'the era of Swinging London', 'about guns in general', 'about World War II'. One or two who saw the caption at 'Swinging London' were confused and thought it meant 'to find out more' about 'Daisy the Doll'. Again, although they were not confused themselves they thought that others (potentially children) could be.

A few commented that the wording was not obvious and they questioned exactly what they would 'find out more' about. One or two thought the word 'information' should be included, for example 'to find out more information go to Sackler Hall' or 'for more information go to Sackler Hall'. One adult thought this would be particularly important for foreign visitors without a good grasp of English as they would be primed to look for the word 'information' if they wanted to find out more about something.

Some thought the caption should be clearer about exactly what the visitor will find in Sackler Hall both in terms of what the information will be about (the objects in the case, other objects, the wider theme of the case) and its format (interactive displays, reference material etc.) A couple of adults interviewed as part of a family group also thought the sign could be more explicit in, so children would know that they are going to be able to use computers for example.

One child commented that the sign made sense and commented that he would be able to 'find out more about the captions'. Again adults in family groups thought children

could be prompted as necessary if they did not pick up on the caption. One family group did confuse the caption with 'Daisy the Doll' and explicitly stated that it was a reference to finding out more about this particular section of the caption.

3.9.3 Positioning on the caption rail

When asked if they would prefer the reference to case 25 and 'to find out more' to be moved to the left of the caption rail (near to the introduction) there were mixed views. Some thought moving it would be effective and reasoned that people would be more likely to notice and read it if it was near the introduction. Others considered it fine where it was and reasoned that once you had reached the end of the case you were told where you could find out more information about it.

3.9.4 Visitor views on accessing information in Sackler Hall

There were mixed views about going somewhere else to find out more information. Some thought it was fine (particularly if an individual was interested in the subject).

"Depends on interest, if [I was] really interested in something [I] wouldn't mind going somewhere else to find out more about it."

A number reasoned that people are used to going to other areas in museums to access additional information (particularly if it is a bank of computer terminals).

"People are used to moving somewhere else to use PCs so this is fine."

Others thought it would be more convenient if additional information (and potentially a computer terminal) was near the display and thought this would result in a higher number of visitors reading / using it.

"It would be helpful to have a terminal near the display."

There were mixed views on going to Sackler Hall from family groups. Some thought that going to another area to access computers at the end of their visit would be fine (and children would enjoy this). Others preferred to access additional information on the spot and one child commented that they would like computers should be in the same room as the displays.

4 Case A: Swinging London

4.1 Introduction

This section focuses on visitors' specific views and reactions to aspects of case A: 'Swinging London'. It begins with visitor reactions to the positioning of the caption rail and then goes on to explore reactions to specific object and caption relationships starting with the group of Mary Quant make-up, followed by the yellow sling back shoes (that do not have a corresponding caption) and the souvenirs of swinging London (that are displayed apart in the case but are mentioned in the same caption). We then feedback visitor views of the background film (Chelsea Bridge Boys), the caption aimed at families and children (Daisy the Doll) and the life story caption (Twiggy). A picture of case A: 'Swinging London' is shown below

Figure 1: Case A: Swinging London



4.2 Position of the Caption Rail

The position of the caption rail was generally perceived as 'fine' and was the preferred of the three caption rails. One or two commented that in this instance they liked the

idea of including all of the captions on a rail running along the front of the case as opposed to splitting the captions and placing them beside the individual objects. One thought the caption rail was in a good position to switch between reading the information and looking at the objects.

One or two considered the rail a little too low (they had yet to visit 'Gun Power' and 'Destruction'), however, one recognised that it could not be positioned much higher as the Museum would need to ensure children are catered for. One felt that care needed to be taken to ensure that once glass had been placed over the case, any reflections created did not hinder people from reading the information.

4.3 Mary Quant Make-up

4.3.1 Ease of recognition

The group of Mary Quant make-up contains approximately 13 items, the caption explaining the make-up was below it on the caption rail and contained a picture of just two of the items, a red nail varnish and a case of eye crayons. The moderator pointed to the group of make-up items (but did not refer to it by name) and asked visitors to find the corresponding caption.

All visitors were easily able to locate the correct caption and told the moderator so – they reasoned that the caption was directly below the group of make-up items and how the red nail varnish on the caption was easy to spot in the group of six nail varnishes included in the display.

“I looked at the bright red nail varnish and found it on the rail.”

4.3.2 Reaction to the idea

In this instance most visitors thought the idea of using two pictures as the key for a group of objects made sense. They explained that as all items were examples of make-up and easily recognisable as such, they felt this made sense. One or two noted that this was the only way the make-up could be shown effectively as including every item would have resulted in a very cluttered caption.

“...because otherwise it would be cluttered, the nail varnish is easily identifiable.”

Children were also easily able to find the caption from the group of make-up and, like the adults, they seemed to focus on the red nail varnish to do this.

4.4 The Yellow Sling Back Shoes

4.4.1 Ease of recognition

The yellow sling back shoes were positioned at the front of the display case between the Mary Quant plastic boots and the Mary Quant make-up. There is no corresponding title or caption on the caption rail.

The moderator pointed to the shoes [but did not refer to them by name] and asked visitors to try to find a corresponding caption. Most visitors realised relatively quickly that there was no corresponding caption on the rail and some were able to explain how they went about attempting to find the caption. One or two looked for information about the shoes near to the caption about the Mary Quant plastic boots (it seemed a sensible place to look). Another linked the shoes to the Twiggy life story and reasoned that the yellow sling backs might be an example of the kind of shoes Twiggy would have worn.

4.4.2 Reaction to the idea

Most visitors felt that there should at least be some information to explain the shoes and put them into context.

“Everything should be identified and explained if possible.”

Initially, some were not that worried about the lack of information about the shoes. However, when questioned further, it often transpired that they were just not interested in those particular shoes. If the object had been something they were interested in, and they had found that it did not have a corresponding caption, this would have caused frustration and, possibly, annoyance.

“Probably a little frustrated, if interested.”

A couple (who were interested in the shoes) thought there should be information and questioned why a simple title and date (like the Mary Quant boots) had not been included. Others commented that the lack of a caption could lead them to question the importance of the object and the reason for its inclusion - if the shoes were important enough to include, why were they not important enough to warrant a caption? One or

two commented that if they noticed an object did not have a caption (when most other objects did) they might assume the Museum had made a mistake and missed a caption out.

When asked where they might find out more if they were particularly interested in the shoes, most mentioned Sackler Hall, which indicates they had picked up on this information from earlier on in the interview. A couple mentioned they would go to Sackler Hall spontaneously, when they were initially told there was no caption to explain the shoes.

4.5 Souvenirs of Swinging London

4.5.1 Ease of recognition

The souvenirs of swinging London included a red matchbox bus, a football mascot, some postcards (which are all displayed together to the left of the case) and a tea towel depicting Chelsea (which is displayed in the middle of the case). The related caption is to the left of the case (below the matchbox bus and football mascot and slightly to the left of the postcards) and includes a picture of the bus and the tea towel, which are explained as individual objects (there is no reference to the mascot or the postcards). The moderator pointed out the caption to visitors (but did not mention what it related to) and asked visitors to find both the corresponding objects. Visitor views on the object and caption arrangement were then explored.

All visitors found both the bus and the tea towel – they took slightly longer to find the tea towel, but maintained that they did not have any great difficulty in doing this. There were mixed views about separating the tea towel from the rest of the group.

4.5.2 Reaction to the idea

Those who had already expressed some dissatisfaction with the lack of alignment between objects and captions, unsurprisingly, did not like the idea. They considered it confusing and thought it lacked logic (even though they had located the tea towel relatively easily). Others seemed to consider it almost as a ‘non issue’ – it did not matter where the objects were displayed as long as they could find them (which they demonstrated they could). Although a few thought it might work better if all souvenirs were displayed together, they did not seem to consider it a big issue that they were not.

“Together if possible, but it’s not a major issue.”

A few recognised the design constraints of the case and explicitly mentioned that they understood why the tea towel had been displayed in the centre.

“It would look odd at the end.”

Visitors interpreted the postcards in a number of ways. Some thought they should be pictured and included in the caption. Like visitor views about the yellow sling back shoes, a few thought visitors would become frustrated if they looked for information about the postcards and could not find it. A few did not consider the postcards as souvenirs; instead they thought they were a visual representation of areas / streets of prominence in swinging London. For this reason they thought they should be linked to the introductory section (where the areas / streets were actually mentioned).

“The postcards are more linked to the introduction section as it refers to the roads.”

Like the adults, the children interviewed as part of family groups were easily able to find both the matchbox bus and the tea towel (again it took them slightly longer to find the tea towel). Neither the adults nor the children felt there was any great issue in displaying the items separately, as long as both were clearly marked on the caption rail. One child (again similarly to a few adults) did not consider the post cards to be part of the group of souvenirs but examples of where people in the 60’s would go.

4.6 The Background Film: Chelsea Bridge Boys

Visitor views on showing a film to accompany the display were largely positive, they thought it would ‘bring the display to life’ and one felt it would draw people in. A few (who were interested in the film) were concerned that they might not be able to see enough of it as it might be hidden behind the objects.

“Fine, unless you can’t clearly see what is on the film, they shouldn’t be blocked by the objects.”

Those who did not like the idea considered the film a distraction and one, who had already commented that the display was busy, thought the film would only add to this. One (elderly respondent) did not personally like the idea of displays using different

media, however, she considered it fine for younger visitors, who she felt were used to 'multi-focusing' their attention on a number of things at the same time.

4.7 The Children's Caption

The caption aimed at families and children was positioned on the far right of the caption rail, outlined by a red border and incorporated a cartoon picture of a character (and no picture of the doll in the display it was linked to). We explored if visitors firstly recognised the caption was aimed at children and families and secondly their views on the design, content and suitability in engaging children.

4.7.1 Design

Everybody recognised that the caption was different. A number commented on the 'red border', 'the funny little character' and the fact that it was more prominent than some of the other captions.

"Red highlight and funky dude in the picture."

Although the design was perceived as different, a proportion of visitors only realised it was aimed at children once they had read it rather than inferring this from the design (although a few did recognise it was aimed at children). This led to a concern, that although it stood out, it was not immediately obvious who it was aimed at. A few thought that as the design did not immediately jump out as being aimed at children, it could be overlooked by both children and their parents (who would not prompt children to look at it).

In terms of the design, visitors made a number of comments

- **The use of a stylised character** – A number of visitors commented on the character used to illustrate the caption. A few could not work out what it was (a character playing with a doll, a character wearing headphones? etc). A few, however, did comment that if the same character was used throughout the gallery then visitors (particularly adults accompanied by children) would become primed to look for it, thus making it more effective. Some thought a picture of the doll should have been used instead (or at least should have been used alongside the character) as it would be more effective in drawing attention to the appropriate object and be consistent with the rest of the display.

“The picture doesn’t match the doll on display.”

- **The use of red** – Although the attempt at making the caption stand out was noticed and appreciated, a couple did not like the choice of colour. They associated red with ‘stop’, ‘a warning’, ‘do not enter’ etc. and suggested using an alternative colour such as blue or yellow.
- **Style** – A few considered the design too formal – it did not look fun or interactive (which is what they reasoned children would be interested in) and there was nothing to immediately attract the attention of children. They thought it would be the object (Daisy the Doll) rather than the caption that would attract a child’s attention.
- **The captions could form a ‘trail’** – One or two (who had recognised immediately that the caption was for children) were positive and thought the way the caption stood out could help to form a ‘trail’ around the Museum for children if similar captions were included on a number of displays,
- **Amount of text** – A few thought there was too much text to engage children and they would be put off or not bother to read it all.

4.7.2 Content and questions

Once they had either realised or been made aware that the caption was aimed at children, all considered it a good idea.

There were mixed views on the suitability of the information for children. Most accepted that older children would be able to understand what the caption was trying to achieve (although a few questioned whether older children would be interested). Some thought that the questions posed would be too complex for younger children and one considered the first question related to finding clothes like Daisy’s as confusing - the clothes in the display were a different colour to the clothes ‘Daisy the doll’ was wearing.

4.7.3 View of family groups

Unsurprisingly, the idea of including a caption aimed at children in the display was positively received by family groups. Unlike the adult sample, adults who were interviewed as part of a family group identified that the caption was aimed at children

more easily (although there were a few comments that the distinction could have been clearer). Perhaps this was because they were primed to look for information that would be of interest to their children and / or they had already noticed other captions aimed at children in other areas of the Museum. Just one adult in a family group did not notice the caption was aimed at children.

The display itself (the doll rather than the caption *per se*) attracted the attention of female children. A couple of young girls (aged approximately 4 or 5) who were interviewed as part of a family groups almost immediately approached the doll (one commented that it was her favourite part of the display) and pointed it out to the adult in the group. They did not take any notice of the caption at first, until an adult pointed it out to them. No boys approached the doll without prompting during the interview (however, due to the subject matter this would be expected),

Unlike some of the adults without children, adults in family groups saw more merit in the information and questions included about 'Daisy the doll'. A few considered the questions fine in prompting children (maybe with a little help) to think about clothes in the past, which they thought would be particularly interesting for girls. One older sibling thought the information was particularly suitable because it focused on what could be seen and related to (the clothes) rather than social trends touched on in other areas of the caption rail.

One or two adults in family groups did think there might be a little too much information and that this might overwhelm young children. Another did not see this as an issue as accompanying adults would be used to helping and prompting children about information and / or questions contained in captions.

4.8 The Life Story

The life story is highlighted on the caption rail by a different colour background (grey) and a larger picture of Twiggy. The caption provided some background information about Twiggy's first 'outing' as a model as well as how she was introduced to modeling. There is no object in the display case. Visitors were asked what they thought of both the design and the inclusion of the life story caption.

The difference in the caption design was noticed by all visitors, who generally commented on the different colour background and sometimes the larger picture (of Twiggy). Most noticed that the text was more descriptive than in other captions and a number picked up that it intended to give a snap shot about a person who was important in that particular era.

Overall, visitors picked up that the caption was not related to an object in the display case (a few were observed looking for an object).

“Not about an object, about a person, it stands out.”

One or two initially thought the model on the front of the ‘The Sunday Times’ magazine was Twiggy. Another thought the caption was related to the pink Mary Quant dress (they interpreted it as an example of the kind of thing Twiggy might have worn).

The use of Twiggy to represent ‘Swinging London’ was generally understood by visitors. She was recognised as an ‘icon’ of the 60’s and an obvious example of a key figure from the fashion scene of ‘Swinging London’. A few commented that Twiggy would not only be recognised by older adults, but also by younger people as she continues to be relevant today (she still features in modern media and advertising). A few (mainly adult males from overseas) did not know who Twiggy was and as a result of this, one commented that they were not interested in the information.

“No I am not interested in her, I don’t know who she is.”

Adults interviewed as part of family groups considered the inclusion of Twiggy as a good example to illustrate the era. They did not consider the lack of an object as confusing and a couple of children (aged around 7) were able to read most of the information provided. One adult interviewed as part of a family group thought the life story was particularly interesting and commented that they would have liked a little more information about Twiggy’s background and how she became famous.

5 Case B: Gun Power

5.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the specific views and reactions from visitors to aspects of case B: Gun Power. It begins with visitor views on the position of the caption rail, then we explore reactions to specific object and caption relationships – the group of six flint guns and the pair of flint guns in the gun case. Visitor perceptions of the painting depicting gun use which appears on the caption rail are then explored. A picture of case B: ‘Gun Power’ is shown below

Figure 2: Case B: Gun Power



5.2 Position of Caption Rail

The position of the caption rail at the back of the display case was well received by most visitors. This (combined with the alignment of the captions and objects) made it easy for visitors to switch from looking at the objects to reading the captions. The height of the case itself (and the caption rail) was a concern for a few.² A couple of adults

² The mock up ‘Gun Power’ case was positioned lower than the planned final display case will be in the lower gallery.

thought children would attempt to climb on the low case, indeed, two did lay over the case during a family interview and one started to try and climb onto it before being stopped). Another, thought the combination of a low caption rail towards the back of the case might make it difficult for people with poor eyesight to read (although nobody complained of this presenting an issue for themselves personally).

5.3 The Six Flint Guns

The six flint guns were displayed in the centre of the case and explained by one caption (directly above them). They were illustrated on the caption rail by a picture of the six guns in an identical layout to the way they were displayed in the case. Visitors were asked their views on the idea of six guns being explained by one set of information.

All visitors found the caption that corresponded to the six flint guns easily. There was confusion about where the caption started and a number of people said they initially started to read it part way through. The text began below the information about the trade card on the caption rail but the picture of the six flint guns (where people's eyes were drawn) was positioned at the top of the next column (part way through the caption text). A number of people commented that they had to backtrack to find the start of the text and that the picture should be aligned to the start of the text.

Visitors' interest in finding out more about one of the guns in particular was mixed (and generally related to how interested an individual was in guns in general). Those who were not interested considered the amount and depth of information fine and commented that there was nothing more they wanted to find out. Another commented that as the guns were all quite similar it was not worth going into a great deal of detail about each one.

“For someone who knows nothing [about guns] the amount and depth [of information] is fine.”

There were concerns about the long block of text from both those who were interested and those who were less interested in the guns. Those that were not interested did not think they would read it and thought they would feel less overwhelmed if it was reduced and / or spaced out a little more.

“There's a lot of information and words to take in.”

Those that were interested thought the information about each of the guns could be organised in distinct 'chunks' so they could easily find information about each gun. A few thought there was potential to include more information about each gun (as long as it was well spaced out).

One or two (who were more engaged in the subject) commented that the guns were quite different to each other and one noted that, as they spanned a time period of 135 years (from 1685 to 1820), they should not be 'lumped together' as they would be quite different. Another (who also would have liked more information) recognised the size restrictions of the case and thought that within the constraints the amount of information was acceptable.

"Personally, I would like to know more about the guns, but within the restrictions it works well."

Children in family groups were easily able to match the six guns with the caption, although, like the adults, there were problems locating the start of the caption. One boy was particularly interested in the guns and after reading out the first part of the caption found the E-Press pocket gun in the display case. There was a general view that the amount of information was sufficient for children and the layout of the case was effective in enabling them to look closely at the guns. One adult asked a child in their group to count the six guns in the case that the caption talked about, which they were easily able to do.

5.4 The Pair of Flint Guns in the Gun Case

There were two pairs of flint guns in the display, one on the left (displayed without a gun case) and one on the right (inside a gun case with other equipment). The corresponding captions were displayed above the objects. The moderator pointed out the caption that referred to the guns inside the case and asked visitors to find the corresponding pair of guns in the display case.

All visitors did this easily (including children). There was no confusion with the pair of flint guns of similar size displayed without the gun case.

5.5 The Picture on the Caption Rail

A picture of a painting by Robert Cruikshank ('The point of Honor decided, or the leaden argument of a love affair') painted in 1825 was included on the right hand side of the caption rail. There was no corresponding object in the display case.

In the main, visitors thought it was fine to include the painting and commented that it helped to put the guns in their historical context. One considered it useful to see how guns were used aside from their obvious use during wars.

"It helps to put it in place ... the who, what, when and why."

A few thought it might be a distraction (and take the emphasis away from the guns), while one thought that, as it did not refer to an object, the Museum should be explicit about why they have included it – what is its significance? One or two thought the text label next to the picture was too small.

Adults in family groups generally appreciated the painting and thought it would encourage children to understand how these guns were used (for dueling) and one commented that it 'livened up the display'. One child particularly liked it because it added a bit of colour to the caption rail.

6 Destruction

6.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the specific views and reactions from visitors to aspects of case C: Destruction. It begins with visitor views on the position of the caption rail, followed by their views on using pictures as the key on the caption rail when the objects are photographs. Finally, we explore visitor views on the captions related to the objects in the display case (the incendiary bombs and detonator, the casting of the unexploded bombs and the casualty label and identification bracelets). A picture of case C: 'Destruction is shown below.

Figure 3: Case C: Destruction



6.2 Position of Caption Rail

There were mixed views on the position of the caption rail (the position was probably the least liked of the three). A number considered it too low; particularly when they realised they needed to study the pictures by the captions in some detail and most bent down to do this. One or two commented that the very people that would be interested in

the display (such as older people who had lived through World War II) might find it difficult to see the information and bending down to look it could present difficulties due to their age.

Although adults in family groups recognised the captions were a good height for younger children, they felt for adults and older children they were a little to low.

6.3 The Photographs

The idea of using pictures on the caption rail when the object on display is a photograph or picture was explored with visitors. There were ten black and white photographs displayed in the case and eight captions explaining them on the caption rail (two photographs did not have a corresponding caption). As well as exploring visitor views on the key, we asked them to find a photograph in the display case from a picture on the caption rail and vice versa.

Overall, visitors were less positive about the idea of using a picture on the caption rail when the object on display was a photograph. When asked to find a caption from looking at the larger photograph and find the photograph from looking at the picture on the caption, they could usually manage to do so - it just took them longer.

“It’s possible [to find the objects and captions], but it does take slightly longer.”

Visitors explained that it took them longer to find the photographs and the captions because of the small size of the pictures used on the caption rail which made it harder to see what they referred to. Furthermore, the caption rail was low down so they had to bend down to study the pictures closely.

“You just have to get down and look at the photos closely.”

A number spontaneously mentioned that the use of a numerical key (or a combination of pictures and numbers) might have been more effective in this display case.

“I would have thought numbers would have been better in this case.”

Additionally there was some confusion with the orientation of the photographs and the corresponding pictures on the caption rail and a few mentioned this. There were

photographs in the display case in portrait orientation represented by pictures on the caption rail in landscape orientation and vice versa. Visitors found this very confusing and it only added to their difficulty in finding photographs and captions.

There were also difficulties related to the alignment of photographs and captions and a couple mentioned this. Most of the captions on the display were not directly below the photographs on the display. One or two noticed that two of the photographs in the display case did not have a corresponding caption and thought visitors would find this particularly frustrating. If it had taken them a while to find previous captions, then they might spend a long time looking for a caption that did not exist, before they realised and this would lead to frustration.

There were, however, a couple of people who were more positive about the approach. They felt that the method encouraged people to look at the photographs in the display case in detail, and in one respondent's words, 'give them the proper respect they deserve'. One or two noted that it was easier to find the photographs and captions where the image was more distinctive (the photograph of the baby and the photograph of the burnt out bus compared to photographs of damaged buildings). One commented that the method worked because the human eye would be drawn to the similarities and it was almost like a game.

"It's like playing snap in your head."

Perhaps unexpectedly children interviewed in family groups were able to find the photographs and the captions on the rail relatively easily and demonstrated this during the interview – one child did this spontaneously while the adult in the group was explaining that it would be too difficult. A couple of adults in family groups thought this method was easier for children than using a numerical method and recognised the fun element of matching up the pictures. There were a few concerns that although children would probably enjoy the task, it would take a long time, perhaps longer than the time they would usually spend at a display.

Overall visitors wanted to look at the real photographs in the display case even though there were pictures of them on the caption rail. The main reason given for this was that the pictures on the rail were too small. However a number of visitors also commented

that even if the pictures on the caption rail were larger they would still want to look at the real photographs and not just reproductions.

6.4 The Objects

6.4.1 The incendiary bombs and detonator

There were five items running the length of the case on the lowest rail, four of these were incendiary bombs and the object on the furthest right, a detonator. The bombs were grouped together on the caption rail (all four were shown in the picture) and the detonator was explained separately. Both captions were on the right of the caption rail. There were two examples of castings of unexploded bombs positioned on the lowest section of the display case (to the right) partially hidden behind the caption rail – the corresponding caption was also on the right of the rail. There was an example of a casualty label and an identification bracelet displayed on the left of the case – the corresponding captions were to the right of the caption rail. Visitor views on the captions and their positioning were explored.

There were mixed views about positioning the incendiary bombs along the front of the case, while having the captions on the right of the caption rail. Some thought this was fine – an individual would move along the case looking at the bombs and then read the caption. Others were not so positive and thought the captions should be directly below the bombs either on the caption rail, or next to the bombs inside the case.

There were also mixed views about the positioning of the objects from family groups. One adult interviewed thought that as the bombs ‘take up half of the display’ they should be given more prominence on the caption rail. Children, interviewed as part of family groups, demonstrated that they were able to find the caption describing the incendiary bombs and the detonator. One child (like some of the adults interviewed) commented that the information should be displayed next to the each of the bombs separately.

6.4.2 The casting of unexploded bombs

A few visitors commented on the positioning of the casting of the unexploded bombs and were concerned that people would not be able to see them (unless they were very close to the case) as they were partially hidden behind the caption rail.

“The bomb cases are hidden, [I] would need to stand right up against the glass.”

6.4.3 The casualty label and the identification bracelets

Some commented on the lack of alignment between the casualty label and identification bracelets and their corresponding captions (at the opposite end of the case). One or two thought this would present particular problems if the case was busy as an individual might not be able to move to the right of the case to read the captions (the objects were on the left).

One child interviewed as part of a family group was particularly interested in the casualty bracelet in the display and, upon finding the caption, questioned why there was no information and only the title and date were given.

7 Visitor Suggestions of Changes

7.1 Introduction

Visitors gave a number of ideas both spontaneously and when asked about how the captions and display cases could be improved. Although people made a number of suggestions about the captions, they sometimes found it difficult to separate these from issues related to the display case – therefore some suggestions relate to the display case rather than the captions. This chapter firstly outlines the suggestions that could be applied to all the cases and then focuses on suggestions made about each of the individual display cases (Swinging London, Gun Power and Destruction) in turn.³

7.2 General Improvements

Visitors suggested some changes that they felt would improve their experience of the display cases in general:

- **Emphasise the introduction caption** – A number of visitors (including those who read the introduction straight away) thought it could stand out more. They thought this could be achieved by increasing the font size, adding a border, highlighting it in a different colour (or a combination of these). One child interviewed as part of a family group thought the introduction would be better positioned in the centre of the caption rail and reasoned that more people would read it and then they move outwards to look at the objects either side.

“The intro needs to be bigger print to lead people in, it needs to stand out more, it gets lost with the rest.”

- **Ensure the ‘to find out more...’ caption is clear and separate from other captions** – A number of visitors considered it important to ensure that this caption did not overlap with any other captions (it currently overlaps with the caption aimed at families and children on the ‘Swinging London’ case) to prevent any confusion that might occur about what ‘to find out more’ refers to. One or

³ We have summarised all the suggested improvements made by respondents regardless of how useful or important they may be.

two thought the caption should be more explicit in terms of what they would find out more about (the objects or the theme of the case) and how they would be able to do this (on a computer, looking at another display etc.)

- **Ensure any captions aimed at children and families are instantly recognisable to children** – A number of visitors made suggested changes to the design to ensure it attracted the attention of children. Suggestions included the use different colours and / or a larger font, making it more interactive, for example by inviting children to ‘press a button’, making it look more exciting etc. One or two thought if the Museum was going to use a character throughout to highlight captions aimed at children, this character should be introduced at the start of the gallery, for example by telling children its name and inviting them to look out for it throughout the gallery. One or two adults thought a picture of ‘Daisy the doll’ should also be included on the caption rail (perhaps along with the cartoon character) for consistency. In terms of the information provided, a couple suggested reducing the amount of text, perhaps by including just one question.

“For a 7 year old there is too much information, it’s overwhelming.”

- **Provide a quiz or questionnaire for children** – A few adults interviewed as part of family groups thought that children would benefit more from the displays if they were given some kind of workbook containing a questionnaire or quiz to complete as they looked around the gallery. One mentioned something similar they had been given for another part of the Museum and thought it could apply equally as well in for these three displays.

7.3 Case A: Swinging London

Not all visitors gave any suggestions to improve this case, a number thought the display worked well as it was. The most frequent suggestions from those that did was related to the life story caption, the alignment of the objects and the case captions and the addition of a caption to explain the yellow sling back shoes.

- **The Twiggy life story** - Although generally well understood as a stand alone piece of information, some visitors thought it would add to the display if a couple of photographs of Twiggy (perhaps from a fashion shoot or an example of a

magazine where she had been the cover star) were added to the display case. One or two felt the life story should be re-positioned to follow the introduction. One reasoned that the introduction provides the context, the life story provides an example of a key individual in a particular era and then these should be followed by explanations of the individual objects – a movement from the general to the specific.

- **Align the objects with the case captions** – Those who were particularly keen for objects and captions to be aligned (and mentioned this at a number of cases) thought that the objects in Swinging London were a little ‘mismatched’ and would benefit from captions placed directly below them.
- **Include a caption to explain the yellow sling back shoes** – Those that were interested in the shoes, and those who took into account other peoples’ interest and potential frustration if they could not find a related caption, thought there should at least be a title and date on the caption rail to explain the yellow sling back shoes.

Other improvements suggested by one or two individuals included:

- **More information about the history of the items** – One or two thought it would be interesting to know why a particular item was so important and why it was included in the display. Other points of interest mentioned were what was its history? Who owned it / them? For example, one visitor was particularly keen to know such information about the Winklepicker shoes.
- **More explanation given to place names** – One overseas visitor did not understand the relevance of Kings Road and Chelsea and thought some context could be provided for overseas visitors not familiar with the area.
- **Place similar objects together** – One visitor thought that objects that she considered similar should be placed together in the display case. For example, she suggested that the clothes were placed together at one end of the case and that the toy matchbox buses should be moved next to ‘Daisy the Doll’ - she viewed them as examples of toys rather than souvenirs.

- **Include contextual information** – One or two visitors suggested that information should be provided about important cultural trends / movements of the era including; ‘Free Love’ symbols, important festivals, film reels of protests etc.
- **Include photographs of people wearing the clothes on display** – One visitor thought this would provide context and the photographs could depict the kind of places people would have worn the clothes to.
- **Add an audio element** – One or two thought an audio (potentially utilising headphones) could be included to illustrate music that was fashionable in the era and one thought this would provide a good link with the Beatles dress.
- **Increase the size of the display case** – One or two (who had commented that the display case was ‘busy’) thought the size of the case should be increased by at least half and the objects could be positioned so they were more spaced out.
- **Provide information in addition to the title for all objects** – One visitor noted the inclusion of information about all objects mentioned on the caption rail except the Mary Quant shoes (where only the title and date were shown) and thought all objects should be explained by more than just a title and date.

7.4 Case B: Gun Power

Again, a number of visitors thought this case was effective and did not suggest any improvements. The main suggestions (from those that thought there could be some improvement) were related to the six flint guns displayed together and explained in the same caption and the picture included on the right of the caption rail:

- **Provide more information about the six flint guns** – Although visitors liked how the guns were displayed, a number (particularly those with who were interested in the guns) thought the display could benefit both from spacing out the larger block of text and providing further information about each of the guns. They thought this information could include; their historical context, who used them and what for, when they were used, what are guns of different sizes used for etc. One or two thought this information could be provided in the form of stories or narratives to ‘bring the guns alive’.

“A little more background on each object, for example the six guns, whether a person of notoriety owned and used them, where they were kept...”

- **Display the picture on the caption rail above the case** – A few suggested removing the picture from the caption rail (one suggested this would allow space for more information about the six flint guns), increasing its size and displaying it on the wall behind the display case. They thought this would draw attention to the case, where the objects are displayed horizontally. One or two recognised that this was dependent on the final positioning of the case – if it was in the centre of the room it might not be possible.

Other improvements suggested by one or two individuals included:

- **Numbering the guns** – One or two suggested numbering the guns and the corresponding information on the caption rail for easy identification.
- **Use the space around the trading card** – One thought there was a lot of ‘dead space’ around the trading card in the display case and that this could be utilised more effectively for information purposes.
- **A vertical rather than horizontal display** – One thought it would be easier to study the guns if they were displayed vertically rather than horizontally. Another thought that if this was not possible the guns towards the back of the case should be raised slightly, so they were above the gun in front.
- **Add an audio element** – One thought an audio element could be introduced to explain the picture and what is happening in the scene.
- **Increase the size of the display** – One (who was interested in the subject) thought the display could be bigger and include more examples of guns.

7.5 Case C: Destruction

Nearly all visitors were able to suggest potential improvements for this case, which were mainly focused on making it easier to match up the photographs in the display case with the information on the caption rail:

- **Increase the size of the pictures on the caption rail** – A number of people considered the pictures on the caption rail too small. They thought if these were increased in size it would be easier to match the captions with the photographs to which they referred.
- **Use numbers as the key to photographs** – This suggestion emerged spontaneously from some and others mentioned it when questioned. Visitors thought numerical labels would work better as the key in this case (although they recognised the pictures worked well for objects). A few guessed the Museum might have wanted to use the same method on all cases for consistency, but reasoned that it would not matter if numbers were used on cases where the objects were very similar or difficult to match up – it was considered more important that the visitor could find what they were looking for.

“In a case like this should include numbers as the pictures are so small and it’s hard to find them.”

- **Reposition the captions** – Some felt captions would be better positioned underneath the photographs they related to. Others considered the captions fine on the caption rail but thought they should be aligned with the relevant photograph in the display.

“What’s wrong with having a description under the photo?”

- **Ensure the orientation of the photographs and the pictures on the caption rail are the same** – The orientation of the photographs in the display case should match the orientations on the caption rail. Visitors thought if the orientation was portrait in the display case it should be the same on the caption rail (and not landscape, as was the case for a few of the captions)

Other improvements suggested by one or two individuals included:

- **Put more emphasis on the photographs** – One considered the photographs as the most significant aspect of the display (they show ‘real life’ and ‘what it was really like’) and commented that the paintings (particularly the larger ‘Fall of the Cuffley Zeppelin’ by Charles Dixon 1916) diverted attention away from the photographs. She thought the paintings should be reduced in size or removed

altogether. Another thought the painting ('Devastation' by Graham Sutherland 1941) was too abstract for the display and should be removed.

"The Sutherland is far to abstract for this display."

- **Reduce the number of photographs in the display case and increase their size** – One thought the number of photographs should halved, increased in size and spaced out. He reasoned that there would be hundreds of photographs available from the two World Wars, so singling out five rather than ten would not negatively impact the display.

- **Separate World War I and World War II** – One or two felt that objects and photographs from the different World Wars should either be displayed in a separate display case, or if this was not possible, in different sections of the same case.

"The World War I and II stuff is together, although [they are] similar [you] could make it distinct in the case."

- **Provide more information about the incendiary bombs and castings of unexploded bombs** – One or two wanted more information on the incendiary bombs in terms of their impact to ensure visitors understood how much damage can result from such a small item. One considered the castings of unexploded bombs interesting and thought a diagram could be included of the whole bomb and the pieces displayed in the case could be highlighted on this to provide context.

"They are just bits of metal otherwise."

- **Improve the lighting** – One thought the lighting should be brighter so the detail on the photographs can be studied easier.
- **Show photographs on a digital screen** – One felt this would be more effective than showing the real photographs as they could be increased in size and shown in a slide show format.

8 Appendix

8.1 Topic Guide

Museum of London

Evaluation of Case Captions: Topic Guide

Date: _____ Interview Number: _____ Rotation: _____

Introduction

1. See notes on how and who to approach at the end.
2. Moderator introduces him/ herself and explains we are conducting a short survey with visitors to the Museum to get their reactions to some display cases and associated information panels that the Museum plan to include in the new section of the Museum due to open in 2010.
3. It will take about 15 minutes to complete and we will need to show them some display cases and ask them some questions about the information the Museum is planning to use to explain the objects
4. We would like to get feedback from all types of visitors no matter how much or how little they feel they know about London and the Museum.

NOTE ON TIMING – We will aim to cover all three cases in the interviews, however this may not always be possible due to the amount to explore. The case rotations will ensure all cases are covered in sufficient depth and where we cannot cover three cases we will aim to cover at least two.

Section 1: Exploration of General Issues

Moderator Note: Check rotation schedule and take visitor/s to display case A [Swinging London], B [Gun Power] or C [Destruction] where you will explore general issues, followed by any specific issues relating to this case.

DO NOT refer to cases by their descriptive names but as case A, B or C.

Ask them to look at the information panel and display case as they would normally do when visiting a museum - give them a few minutes to do this.

- **When looking at displays similar to this one, what do you tend to do:**
 1. Look at the objects on display and, for the objects you are interested in, try to find out information about them
 2. Study the captions and, for those that look interesting, try to find the object it refers to
 3. A combination of the above
- **And would you say you...**
 1. spend more time looking at the objects on display
 2. spend more time reading the captions
 3. spend an equal amount of time on looking at the objects and reading the captions

- When looking at displays similar to this one:
 - How important is it that **every object has a corresponding caption or label?**
 - How would you feel if there was **an object you were particularly interested in, but you could not find a caption or label?**

- **Initial reactions** to case captions
 - What do you like / dislike? - Why

- How easy did you find it to **link together the objects with the relevant captions?** Probe and record details of specific difficulties

- What do you think of the idea of **using photographs of the objects as a key**
 - Do you think it **works?**
 - Do you find the idea **interesting?**
 - **Do you think you would want to find the object** even though you can see a photograph of it on the caption rail?

- Aside from the use of photographs what do you think **about the design** of the captions? Prompt on:
 - The way the information is **laid out**
 - The **size of the text**

- **Now focusing on what the information tells you** - what do you think of the way the objects are explained?
 - Do you find it **interesting?** – Why?
 - Is it **easy to understand?**
 - Do the captions **encourage you to look at the objects** to which they refer?
 - Do you think you would spend **more or less time looking at an object if there were no captions at all?**

- What do you think of the **amount of text/information** used to explain each object
 - Are there any aspects where there is **too little text/information?** – Where you would like to know more?
 - Any aspects where there is **too much text/information?** – Where you do not think you need to know all the information?

- Now looking at the **complete set of captions**, how do you feel about the amount of text on the display?
 - Too much / too little / just right?

Moderator Instruction: Point at out the introductory text panel but DO NOT describe it

- **Did you read** this text here when I brought you to the case – why / why not?
 - **At what point** did you read it – at the start, middle or end?

Moderator Instruction: Ask visitor to read if they have not already

- What do you think is the **purpose** of this text?
- Do you think it is **important for people to read this before** looking at the objects and corresponding information?
 - If someone had not read it, do you think this would effect their understanding / enjoyment?

Moderator Instruction: Point out the text in the brown box 'Case 25: To find out more go to Sackler Hall'.

Explain that Sackler Hall is an information zone they can go to where they can use computers to find out more information.

- What would you say this **caption relates to**?
 - What do you **understand by 'Case 25'**? – Does it relate to the whole of the case / part of the case etc?
 - What do you **understand by 'To find out more...'** – to find out more about what (the whole case / part of the case)?

- Would it be clearer if the **case number was linked to the introductory text**?

- Would it be clearer if the **caption was worded 'to find out more about the objects in the case or individual objects'**?

- What do you think of the suggestion that you could **find out more by going to the Sackler Hall**?
 - Would you mind going somewhere else or would you prefer to find out further information on the spot?

Moderator note: Explore specific issues at starting case then take respondent to remaining two cases (according to the rotation order) to explore specific question related to those cases

Specific Questions Case A: Swinging London

- **[Moderator: Only ask if NOT covered during general questioning]** – Explore initial reactions to the information provide about the objects
 - Likes / dislikes?
 - Understanding?
- What do you think of the **positioning of the information rail**?
 - Is it at a **comfortable height** to read the captions?
 - Is it in a **good position** to switch between looking at the objects and then the captions?

Moderator Instruction: The group of Mary Quant make-up, which contains 13 items of make-up plus a Mary Quant vitamin tin is illustrated by a nail varnish and make-up crayons on the case caption. DO NOT EXPLAIN THIS TO RESPONDENTS INSTEAD...

Point to the group of make-up in the display case and ask visitors to find the corresponding information on the caption rail.

Moderator note if they found the information: circle – Yes / No

- Explore **how easy was it to find the information** explaining the make-up?
 - What do you think of the idea of **showing a number of objects in the display case but only two items shown on the information rail**? – is this clear to you?

Moderator Instruction: The yellow sling back shoes DO NOT have any corresponding information on the caption rail

Point at the shoes in the display case and ask visitors if they can find the corresponding information on the caption rail – Give them a few moments and if they do not realise there is no corresponding information – tell them.

- Explore thoughts on the idea of including objects in the display case that do not have any information on the caption rail?
 - Do you find this idea **clear – why?**
 - If you were particularly interested in these shoes **how would you feel if you couldn't find a caption** telling you about them?
 - If you wanted **to find out more** about these shoes, how might you do it?

Moderator Instruction: The souvenirs of 'Swinging London' are illustrated on the caption rail by a red toy bus and the Chelsea tea towel. Although they are grouped together on the caption rail they are displayed in slightly different areas in the display case (the bus is with another bus and a football mascot in front of Time Magazine and next to some postcards to the left of the case) and the tea towel is displayed behind the shoes in the middle.

Point out the information on the caption rail and ask visitors to find the two corresponding objects in the display case

Moderator note if they found

the bus: circle – Yes / No

the tea towel: circle – Yes / No

- Explore **how easy it was to locate the bus and the tea towel** in the display case?
 - Do you think it matters that the **two objects are not displayed together** in the case, but shown together on the caption rail? – Is this clear?
 - There are a number of **souvenirs in the display case – but only two are used in photographic key and explained** on the caption rail – is it clear the caption relates to the group?

Moderator Instruction: The family / children's caption is 'Daisy the Fashion Doll' towards the end of the caption rail. DO NOT TELL RESPONDENTS THIS

Point out the caption but DO NOT DESCRIBE IT and the corresponding doll in the display case.

Moderator - please bear in mind that this caption is more likely to appeal to girls and prompt accordingly for male children.

- What would you say is **different** about this particular caption? (NB Is respondent aware it is aimed at children? – if necessary, ask: who do you think this caption is aimed at?)
- What do you think of the **idea of including information aimed specifically at families / children?** - Is it obvious that this caption is aimed at families / children? – How?
 - What do you think of **the way it looks** compared to the rest of the caption rail? – Would it appeal to children?
 - **Is the way the doll is explained suitable for children** – would they be interested in / understand the information? Would they be able to answer the questions?

Moderator Instruction: The life story caption is about Twiggy and DOES NOT have a corresponding object in the display case.

Ask visitors to read this BUT DO REFER TO IT BY NAME – if they have not done so already

- What would you say is **different** about this caption?
 - After reading this would you **assume that it is linked to an object?** - Does it matter that it is not?
 - What do you think of it as a **stand alone piece of information** – is it interesting to you?
 - Is it clear to you why it has been included with this display – explore reasons why?
- What do you think about the idea of **video footage** being shown in the display?

- Thinking now about all aspects of the information captions and the way they describe what is in the display case – **what, if anything, would you change?** Why do you say that?

Specific Questions - Case B: Gun Power

- [If not explored during general questioning] – What are your **initial reactions** to the information provide about the objects
 - Likes / dislikes?
 - Understanding?
- What do you think of the positioning of the information rail?
 - Is it at a **comfortable height** to read the captions
 - Is it in a **good position** to switch between looking at the objects and then the captions?

Moderator Instruction: There are six guns, which are displayed as a group in the middle of the case

Point to one of the guns and ask the visitor to imagine that they are interested in that particular gun and want to find out more about it – ask them to find the information on the caption rail that would tell them more about the gun.

- Explore how **easy was it to find out the information** related to the gun?
 - What do they think of the **idea of the six guns being explained by one set of information?** – Is it clear?
 - Would you want to **know more about one particular gun?**
 - Do you know how you might go about finding out more information if you wanted to?

Moderator Instruction: There are two sets of pairs of flint guns – one pair is in a case and one pair is not.

Point to the information about the two flint guns in the case on the caption rail and ask visitors to find the corresponding object in the display case

- Explore **how easy was it to find** the guns
 - Did you **confuse them with the two guns (of similar size)** in the display without the case?
- Looking now at the **picture** what are your views on this being in the display? (Likes dislikes)
- Thinking now about all aspects of the information captions and the way they describe what is in the display case – **what, if anything, would you change?** Why do you say that?

Specific Questions – Case C: Destruction

- [If not explored during general questioning] – What are your initial reactions to the information provide about the objects
 - Likes / dislikes?
 - Understanding?
- What do you think of the positioning of the information rail?
 - Is it at a **comfortable height** to read the captions
 - Is it in a **good position** to switch between looking at the objects and then the captions?

Moderator Instruction: There are 10 photographs in the display case and 8 of these are explained on the caption rail.

Pick one of the photographs in the display case and ask visitors to find the corresponding caption.

Moderator note if they found the caption: circle – Yes / No

- How easy did you find it to **locate the information** on the caption rail?

Moderator Instruction: Now pick one of the photographs on the caption rail and ask visitors to find the corresponding photo in the display case

Moderator note if they found the photo: circle – Yes / No

- How easy did you find it to **locate the photo** in the display case?
- Do you think the **idea of using a photo of the object works when the object being displayed is a photo, document or picture?**
 - [If not covered during general questioning] – If you can **see a small photo on the caption rail next to the information would you still want to find the real photo** in the display case?
- Thinking now about all aspects of the information captions and the way they describe what is in display case – **what, if anything, would you change?** Why do you say that?

Classification

Can I just end by asking you a few questions about yourself and your party?

SHOWCARD Code age (Under 12, 13-16, 17-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55 – 64. 65-74, 75+)

Code age R1_____ R2_____ R3_____ R4_____ R5_____

and gender R1_____ R2_____ R3_____ R4_____ R5_____

Place of residence London

Other UK

Europe

North America / Canada

Other _____

Notes: Who to Interview and how to select them

You should not interview members of staff and or teachers and students visiting as part of a school group.

Position yourself in the entrance to the main gallery and approach the first eligible person / group and invite them to take part in an interview. If they are willing, **take them to the lower ground floor (you will need to use the lift)** where interviews are to be conducted. If the person / group refuses or is ineligible, repeat this process. Once complete return to the recruitment area and select the next respondent/s in the same way.

The museum would like to compare and contrast views between UK/ London adults, overseas adults and family groups. Please keep a note (on the Demographics sheet) of the proportion of interviews in each group, ensure an even split each day and do not over sample any one group.

Rotations

You will need to rotate the order in which you take visitors to the three mock-up display cases. The cases are labelled as follows:

Case A – Swinging London

Case B – Gun Power

Case C – Destruction

You should follow the rotation schedule given below for your day of moderating. Please note visitors will always be taken to Case A either first or second (due to the number of issues we need to explore).

You should also keep an eye on demographics and aim to get a spread of UK / London adults, overseas adults and family groups seeing the cases in different orders.

Interview	Case Rotation	Interview	Case Rotation	Interview	Case Rotation
1	ABC	13	ABC	25	ABC
2	CAB	14	CAB	26	CAB
3	BAC	15	BAC	27	BAC
4	ACB	16	ACB	28	ACB
5	ABC	17	ABC	29	ABC
6	CAB	18	CAB	30	CAB
7	BAC	19	BAC	31	BAC
8	ACB	20	ACB	32	ACB
9	ABC	21	ABC	33	ABC
10	CAB	22	CAB	34	CAB
11	BAC	23	BAC	35	BAC
12	ACB	24	ACB	36	ACB

Demographics

Please keep a tally of the number of interviews you conduct with different groups on each day. We need to ensure we have an equal spread of adults (UK/London), adults (Overseas) and family groups

Thursday 19th June

	Adult	Family	Total
UK / London			
Overseas			
Total			

Friday 20th June

	Adult	Family	Total
UK / London			
Overseas			
Total			

Saturday 21st June

	Adult	Family	Total
UK / London			
Overseas			
Total			