

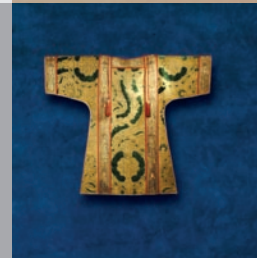


An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

The logo for the Museum Awards, featuring a stylized letter 'M' composed of purple and green geometric shapes, with the words "MUSEUM AWARDS" in purple capital letters below it.

**MUSEUM  
AWARDS**

2008-09





Patron:  
The President of Ireland  
Mrs Mary McAleese

## The Museum Awards

Guidance Notes

### What are the Museum Awards?

The Museum Awards aim to highlight and celebrate the achievements of museums and collections, together with their curators and staff, as they strive to care for and protect our heritage, and make it as accessible to as many people as possible. The awards are a partnership between the Northern Ireland Museums Council and the Heritage Council. The current phase is administered by the Heritage Council as a scheme complementary to its Museums Standards Programme: [www.museumsireland.ie](http://www.museumsireland.ie)

A Steering Group chaired by Dr Anne Kelly advises the awards.

The Judging Panel is chaired by BBC Radio 3 presenter, Mr Sean Rafferty. It consists, at present, of the following members:

- 1 Mr Pat Cooke
- 2 Elizabeth Crooke PhD
- 3 Maurice Davies
- 4 Dr Michael John Gorman
- 5 Emily Hourican  
ICHAWI: represented by
- 6 Adrian Kennedy  
IPCRA: represented by
- 7 Jessica Baldwin
- 8 Pat McBride
- 9 Lar Joye
- 10 Professor Declan McGonagle
- 11 Dr Jim McGreevy
- 12 Rowena Neville
- 13 Sonya Perkins
- 14 Aidan Walsh
- 15 Edward M Walsh
- 16 Finbarr Whooley





## Who can enter?

- The Awards are open to all organisations in Northern Ireland and the Republic that meet the International Council of Museums' Definition of a Museum (<http://icom.museum/definition.html>):

'A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment'.

- There is no restriction on the scale, focus or interest of museums applying. The judges will take into consideration the level of resources available to the museum in making their decisions.
- The overall Museum Award is confined to Registered / Accredited museums in Northern Ireland and those museums participating in the Heritage Council's Museums Standards Programme.

## Is there a timeframe?

Projects which you are entering for consideration must take place during the period 1st January 2007 - 30th April 2009. The timeframe for exhibitions and websites is shorter (see under Exhibitions and Publications category).

## How do I enter?

- There are four award categories:  
**Collections Care**  
**Education and Community Engagement**  
**Local Authority Museums**  
**Exhibition and Publications**
- Applicants must complete a separate form for each award category within which they wish to be considered.
- Entry to any of these four categories automatically enters your museum for consideration for the overall Museum Award; therefore a separate application form for the overall Award is not required.
- Only those museums that have entered for one of the other categories may be considered for the overall Museum Award.

## Can I enter more than one category?

### Can I submit multiple applications?

- **Yes.** Each museum may enter for any category, but a separate application form is required for each.
- You may also enter multiple projects for any one category, using a separate form for each project.

## Is there a deadline for submissions?

- There are two deadlines for submitting applications to facilitate the two phases of the judging rounds in 2008 and 2009.
- The first deadline is **30th May 2008**. Applications up to that date will be assessed between 1st June and 16th October 2008.
- The second deadline is **17th October 2008**. Applications up to that date will be assessed in the winter months 2008 / 2009.
- You may submit an application at any time, up to 30th May 2008 and / or 17th October 2008 so long as it allows the judging panel enough time to view the project by late March 09.
- The earlier you submit your application(s) the better.
- The awards ceremony will be in mid May 2009





## What do we get if we win?

The Museum Awards are in recognition of what has been achieved by your museum and the staff involved in its operation. The awards are a public acknowledgment of excellence by your peers. The award itself comprises an award certificate, of display quality, together with a piece of contemporary graphic art. The overall 'Museum Award' will consist of a specially commissioned piece of sculpture.

## Where do I send my application?

Completed applications, together with supporting material, must be sent to

**Museum Awards**  
**The Heritage Council**  
**Áras na hOidhreachta**  
**Church Lane**  
**Kilkenny**

The Heritage Council will only accept applications which are submitted on the appropriate form, duly completed and signed.

## Who should I contact if I need more information or advice on completing the application form?

Staff at the Northern Ireland Museums Council and the Heritage Council are happy to advise applicants on the technical aspects of the application process. Understandably, they cannot supply information on the profile of any other applications.

Contact details:

**The Heritage Council**  
Telephone: + 353 (0) 56 7770777,  
e-mail [martina@heritagecouncil.com](mailto:martina@heritagecouncil.com)

**Northern Ireland Museums Council**  
Telephone +44 (0) 28 90550215  
e-mail [astdir@nimc.co.uk](mailto:astdir@nimc.co.uk)

## Why should I enter?

The dedication, skill, knowledge and achievements of people who work in the museum sector, be it on a professional or voluntary basis, is well known. The Museum Awards have a record of success in highlighting, and celebrating, such accomplishment.

The list of past winners demonstrates that it is not just the large institutions that win; it includes many small, volunteer-run museums too. Size is not particularly important for the judging panel, quality is.

The Heritage Council and the Northern Ireland Museums Council are confident that your organisation has something to be proud of, and in entering the Awards you contribute to that bank of knowledge and good practice so useful to the ongoing development of the sector.

What will happen to my application?

The Heritage Council and the Northern Ireland Museums Council have invited a wide range of people to sit on the judging panel. They have been selected for their experience, knowledge and understanding of the sector, together with a breadth of business and media awareness.

The Heritage Council will confirm receipt of your application in writing. The Steering Group and Judging panel will review the entries and, depending on the number entered, may proceed to shortlist.

The Heritage Council will write to you to let you know whether you have been shortlisted, and, if applicable, contact you to arrange the judges' visit.

The judges' decisions will be announced, and the awards made, at a ceremony that will take place to coincide with International Museums Day in May 2009, to which all entrants will be invited. The judges' decisions are final.

After the awards ceremony, the Heritage Council will write to you to provide feedback on your application, based on the judges' report.

## How will my application be judged?

The judging criteria for each category are set out separately. Please read them carefully, as they will guide the completion of your application.





## Best Collections Care Award

This award will be made to organisations that provide evidence of overall commitment to care of collections. Rather than an individual conservation project, as previously, the applicant will be expected to provide evidence of ongoing preventive conservation measures together with overall care of collections.

In partnership with the Conservation sector the Heritage Council is developing a specific object conservation award scheme that will acknowledge the skills base of individual conservators. Details for this separate scheme are anticipated later in 2008.

The types of project to be considered under 'Best Collections Care' follow. The examples given are not intended to be exhaustive:

- Improvements in collections documentation e.g. introducing and effective use of new documentation systems such as computerised documentation records.
- Storage achievements, e.g. installing a new storage system, or introducing conservation-grade storage materials.
- Improvement in preventative conservation, e.g. new lighting systems, pest control or instituting and acting upon an environmental monitoring system.
- Interventions, including staff training, to safeguard the ongoing care of collections
- Provision of public access to the conservation process, so as to improve public understanding about the importance of conservation work being undertaken by museums 'behind the scenes'.
- New security systems that safeguard the collections, including those on display and / or those in storage.

### Criteria:

- Overall impact of the conservation measures on the museum's standards of collections care
- Contribution of the project to preventive conservation
- The degree to which the measures enhance access to collections in storage to both public and staff
- Sustainability

## Best Education and Community Engagement

This category focuses upon the success of museums in making their collections and services overall as accessible as possible.

Education and Community Engagement includes projects and programmes that enhance social inclusion by reaching out to disadvantaged or marginalised groups or individuals who may not previously have had access to museum collections, or may not have benefited from the services that museums provide.

In order to facilitate judging, you should supply dates where appropriate and possible, when judges can witness activities taking place.

The following are examples of the types of initiative will be considered:

- Development of education programmes that complement the curricula of schools, or further and higher education establishments, or meet identified adult learning needs.
- Development and effective use of new means of involving users and non-users in developing the museum's services e.g. friends schemes; visitor consultation groups; user panels
- Provision of access to stored collections, particularly to people who previously have not used the museum's collections
- Provision of information and services to meet specific audience needs so as to enhance their enjoyment of the museum and the benefits they derive from it, e.g. usage of accessible formats / minority languages, physical access improvements.
- Outreach to hard-to-reach groups and communities, beyond the walls of the museum
- New ways of responding to and build upon communities' interests so as to provide services to them which are in keeping with the museum's skills and expertise.

### Criteria:

- Evidence of planned development of new audiences
- The degree to which the project has broken down physical, financial or intellectual barriers
- Evidence of two-way relationships between the museum, and its users and non-users
- Evidence of positive feedback from participants
- Sustainability



## Best Exhibition or Publication

This category includes exhibitions and publications in their broadest sense. This may include:

- Printed publications (books, catalogues, collections guides etc.)
- Electronic publications and exhibitions (websites, DVDs, CD-Roms)

There is no restriction on the type of work; it may be scholarly or for a more general audience.

**Please note that in order to enable the judging to take place, only exhibitions that are on display or websites that are online during the period 1st June 2008 - 6th March 2009 can be considered.**



### Criteria:

- Originality and imagination in the interpretation of collections or subject matter
- Degree to which the project 'unlocks' information that was not previously available elsewhere
- Strategic approach to making knowledge about the museum's collections and specialist subject area(s) more accessible
- Design quality
- Visitor / user feedback (in the case of publications online this will include statistical analysis of website usage)
- Accessibility to the target audience
- Sustainability of impact

## Local Authority Museum/Museum Service

This category is open only to museums and museum services that are owned and governed by local authorities.

Across the island of Ireland a growing range of Local Authorities are actively involved in supporting the care and presentation of cultural heritage through museums and / or museum services.

The purpose of this award is to support the profile of museums within their local authorities, and to acknowledge the achievement and accomplishment of local authorities and their staff in delivering museum services for the public good.

Whilst the provision of a dedicated museum building will be taken as a clear sign of local authority commitment to their museum service, applications from museum services that are not housed within dedicated buildings but instead are working to provide public access to cultural heritage and collections through outreach are also welcomed.

Applications within this category must be counter-signed by the County Manager / Chief Executive of the Local Authority.

### Criteria:

- Architectural quality of the main museum building (if relevant)
- Commitment to care of collections, reflected in the way that they are housed and the support given to their preventive conservation.
- Originality and quality of Museum Programme (including exhibitions, education and outreach, events, and publications, as relevant).
- Partnerships built up between the museum service and other interested parties, including, for example, local independent / voluntary-run museums, libraries and archives, local history groups, etc.
- Evidence of strategic planning for the development of the museum's services, and integration of the service within the Local Authority's overall Strategy.
- Commitment to the professional development of museum staff.
- Evidence of Local Authority commitment to the sustainability of the museum.



## Museum of the Year Award

Entry to any of the four categories above automatically enters your museum for consideration for the overall Museum Award; therefore a separate application form for the overall Award is not required.

Only those museums that have entered for one of the other categories may be considered for the overall Museum Award. Judges will draw upon the evidence provided in entries to the other categories.

The supreme award is confined to museums which have been Registered / Accredited by the Northern Ireland Museums Council or participant in the Heritage Council's Museums Standards Programme ([www.museumsireland.ie](http://www.museumsireland.ie)).

The Museum of the Year Award category will be assessed across a broad spectrum of museum activity. The judges will look at the organisation across all aspects of a museum's operation and will acknowledge the standards implicit in the Accreditation and Standards Programmes.

### Areas to be considered will include:

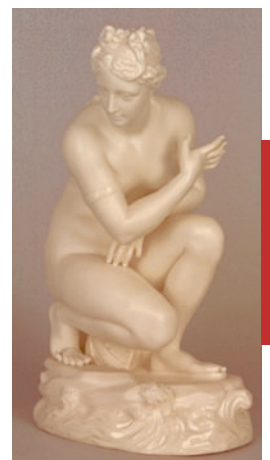
- Audience development achievements
- Collections care
- Commitment to the sustainability of the museum and the services it provides.
- Design quality (of internal spaces, exhibitions, and publications)
- Development of the building, its functionality and its usage by the public
- Museum leadership and management
- Overall Museum Programme
- Partnerships built up between the museum and other organisations in order to effectively deliver its aims
- Physical and intellectual accessibility
- Professionalism of staff and commitment to their development
- Strategic approach to the development of the museum and its services
- Visitor facilities



The overall Museum Award is one of high prestige. Consequently those under consideration for the award must demonstrate that they have achieved high standards in most, if not all, of the areas detailed above.

As with other award categories, the judges will take into account the level of resources available to your organisation.

The judges may seek external validation of their decision through enlisting the expertise of an international museum specialist.





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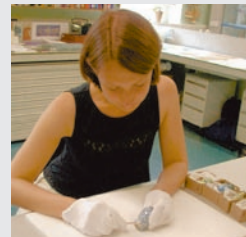


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