



RESEARCH STRATEGY 2020-2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

IWM is a global authority on conflict and its impact on people's lives – from 1914 through to the present day. Our mission is to develop and communicate a deeper understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war. A key contributor to this is the IWM Institute, the creative hub set up in 2018 to explore and experiment with new ways of deepening public understanding of war and conflict through research, public programming and digital innovation.

Research is pivotal to this work. IWM's expertise in innovative public engagement, our appetite for new approaches and our knowledge of our extensive collections provide an essential underpinning to how we curate and present the history of conflict.

It is our intention that IWM's research should speak not just to the academic community but to all our visitors. Our research programme supports IWM's corporate priorities as laid out in the IWM Corporate Plan. We believe that a fusion of expertise from different quarters is vital for public understanding and that historians, journalists, NGOs, cultural producers, artists, and policy experts all have a role to play in helping us to interpret our challenging subject matter.

This document sets out:

- The research objectives we have identified
- The context in which research at IWM takes place
- The audiences we want our research to reach
- How we will implement that research
- How we will evaluate our success

The IWM Institute oversees the Research Strategy which works in association with and supports the principles of the following policy documents:

IWM Public Programme strategy
The Public Engagement and Learning Strategy
The Digital Transformation Strategy
The Training and Development Strategy
The Access and Inclusion Strategy
The Reputation and Brand Governance Board

2 OBJECTIVES

This strategy's principal objective is to guide, encourage and support research of the highest quality, and to form and maintain research partnerships which support IWM's corporate plan and assist IWM in the attainment of its long-term goals in the fields of public programming, Public Engagement and Learning, Documentation and Digital.

We will do this by placing research at the heart of IWM's public outputs, and specifically through:

supporting experimentation with ever more inventive methods and approaches which will enrich the experiences of our visitors, both within our museums and online;

further developing our expertise in research grant capture, so that winning and administering research grants becomes an activity with which all curators are familiar;

enhancing IWM's academic reputation and contributing to the fullest possible understanding of our subject matter and our collections;

developing our expertise in effective **partnerships and international collaboration**;

unlocking access to our collections through programmes and projects which fuse academic insight and digital innovation;

shaping and nurturing a user-friendly, well-regulated and encouraging **research environment** in which historical, curatorial, public engagement and digital expertise can be developed.

3 CONTEXT

3.1 BACKGROUND

2010 saw the establishment of IWM's first Research Department and in the following year IWM attained full Independent Research Organisation status.

Since then, IWM has led two AHRC-funded research projects; expanded its research capacity through the in-house training of its staff on a range of research-related skills; and built a large range of contacts and partnerships across the academic sector.

2018 saw the pilot launch of the IWM Institute for the Public Understanding of War and Conflict. This integrates IWM's research, public programming,

partnership and digital innovation activities. It reaches beyond traditional museum practices to explore a number of innovative themes.

IWM plays an active role in IROC, the Independent Research Organisations Consortium representing the IROs with eligibility for funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which has been co-chaired by IWM's Head of Research and Academic Partnerships since 2016. Through this work, IWM is committed to consolidating and further developing research practice specific to the cultural sector, including practice-based research as well as purely academic.

3.2 OUR AUDIENCES

IWM is committed to broadening its audiences and ensuring that its work has impact across society. The following groups are known consumers of our research efforts and we aim to ensure that their needs are served:

visitors to our sites, who gain insights into research through our themed seasons;

users of our research rooms - an audience which has far-reaching significance, as its members reach deep into our collections and develop new narratives from them;

Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PhD students, current and past, who, through the IWM CDP Network, play an increasingly participative role in our work;

online audiences – for whom our sophisticated digital offer is a key avenue to deepening public understanding;

commercial users of our collections, who have the potential through mass-media productions such as film, television documentaries, books and digital products, to reach very wide audiences.

3.3 RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND ORGANISATION

Interdisciplinarity: we recognise that there is merit in taking a multi-disciplinary approach to research and that this will provide notably creative approaches to interpreting our subject matter;

Partnership working: we recognise that the very high volume of research being carried out relating to conflict brings IWM significant advantages;

Relevance: All research conducted by IWM staff needs to be applied to known public outcomes, or to the improved understanding of our collections, and to contribute to delivery of IWM's Corporate Plan.

Strategic: Our vast and varied collections mean there are many more research opportunities available than we can support. IWM supported research will have clear outcomes that support the strategic aims of our Corporate Plan.

4 IMPLEMENTATION AND GOVERNANCE

The IWM Institute will oversee current and planned research activities, projects and publications, ensuring that they are mapped against major projects and public-facing activities.

Dialogue and creative discussions between curators and IWM

Associates: During its pilot phase, IWM has appointed eighteen individuals with a strong commitment to public engagement in our field to become IWM Associates. We will bring our curatorial teams into direct discussion with these Associates, according to specific needs, and aim to develop the highest-quality programming and collecting from this dialogue.

The Department of Research and Academic Partnerships will support the work of the Institute, and ensure that all forward planning, external representation and the day-to-day management of research are carried out to a high standard.

The IWM Institute Board will ensure that:

- The opportunity offered by our eligibility for UK Research Councils and other funding is deployed strategically, providing new and challenging avenues to public understanding of our subject matter;
- Research opportunities are used for career development so that staff demonstrating commitment to research are given full support and direction;
- IWM properly directs all relevant resources to ensure that its reputation as a research organisation is developed fully.

The Research Blog, managed by our Collaborative Doctoral Partnership students, will continue to provide insights into research activity across IWM.

Our **academic mailing list** will ensure that all wishing to be kept informed of opportunities arising from IWM's Research may do so.

The Retail, Communications and Digital Engagement departments will play a proactive role in disseminating research produced by IWM staff, seeking avenues in the UK media judiciously and in a manner which supports IWM public programmes and approved research activity;

5 OUR RESEARCH OUTCOMES

In its two-year pilot phase, the IWM Institute will foster the development of the following research themes:

Historical themes

Legacies of Empire (responding to the Access and Inclusion, Public Engagement and Learning and Audience Development Strategies)
Research into this area will be intensified, with an emphasis on understanding the social and economic effects of the two world wars on those who were living in the former colonies and how the conflicts impacted on their efforts towards independence.

Truth and lies in war (responding to the above strategies)
'Fake news' is nothing new. The advent of radio meant that propaganda could be spread through enemy territory, producing the 'Black propaganda' initiatives of the Second World War. Later the media were deployed to maintain antagonism and fear during the Cold War. This strand will explore these themes and the powerful impact social media is having on international affairs today.

Mental health and war (responding to the above strategies)
A series of CDP studentships and other projects will explore this key theme, for which our collections are a notably rich source.

Museological themes

Understanding and building our collections (responding to the four Collecting Strategies)
IWM's collections have long been the bedrock of our research efforts, and this will continue, with an emphasis on researching how to fill identified gaps – particularly with regards to the Cold War and Contemporary eras, and telling stories which were marginalised in earlier decades.

Innovative learning (responding to the Public Engagement and Learning, Audience Development, Access and Inclusion and Digital Transformation Strategies)

Two key initiatives led by our Learning teams will a) bring the latest research into neurodiversity to bear on our interpretation methods and b) find new ways for our visitors to engage with STEM through visits to HMS Belfast and Duxford Airfield.

Heritage and museology (responding to the Collections Management, Digital Transformation and Estate Management Strategies)
Understanding what our global audiences might want to do with our collections in the future is a key challenge. To prepare for this, we will

continue to engage with major initiatives such as the AHRC's *Towards a National Collection*. We will also bring cutting-edge expertise to preserving our extensive collections and historic sites, which present a range of challenges, including the long term preservation and development of IWM Duxford and HMS Belfast.

Examples of the range of outcomes arising from **past funded research** include:

- A wider participation in the First World War centenary than might have been the case through dissemination of the AHRC Connected Communities *Whose Remembrance?* project;
- Awareness of the potential of the BBC Monitoring transcripts archive for academic study, popular consumption and commercial exploitation on an international scale;
- Public awareness of the scale and intensity of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic, arising from the media attention on an IWM-based CDP student's research on this theme.

6 MEASURING SUCCESS

The improved connection between Research and our Public Programmes means that the impact of Research activity can be measured in broader terms than before, and our Marketing Department's audience research will calculate the degree to which research projects have enriched specific public programmes.

The individual research outputs of IWM staff are monitored by the Institute Board, with a view to ensuring that they are of a high quality and support our goals, and that staff at all stages of their careers are given opportunities which strengthen their capacity to participate and lead academic projects.

Research attainments are reported in our annual Research Report which can be seen on the Research Pages of the website. KPIs are as follows:

- We will build academic research capacity within IWM by recruiting staff as potential PIs or CIs, with 5 in 2020/21, 6 in 2021/22 and 2022/23, and 7 in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

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