

Working with Film and Television Productions at your Museum

- **What is this advice sheet about?**

This advice sheet is about the necessary arrangements for museums in working with production companies who use the museum buildings, the grounds, facilities and their collections as a location for filming and/or making television programmes.

- **Who is this information for?**

It is for anyone who has **responsibility for managing or caring for the museum and its collections**. This includes trustees, staff and volunteers who make decisions concerning or are involved in the practical arrangements with organizations filming and/or making TV programmes at the museum or using the museum's collections.

It is also specifically for the person or department responsible for **looking after filming requests** made to the museum.

Sometimes the responsibility might be split between different staff and departments, depending on whether the footage publicises the museum directly (for example, by mentioning its name or showing its logo), or whether the museum is 'merely' used as a good location for helping create what the producer wants to convey.

- **Why is this information useful?**

Filming requests can present a **good commercial opportunity** and publicity for museums, with their unique settings, vantage points, historical associations and specialised collections. It is useful to be able to maximise these opportunities when they arise.

These opportunities often arise at short notice and it is helpful to have guidance to hand if initial responses or decisions are required quickly.

It is important not to become star-struck in the face of production companies, or flustered by the tight deadlines these companies understandably work to. This sheet helps you deal with filming requests in a **calm, professional, step-by-step way**.

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It is important to remember that while a production company may wish to work with your museum site or collections for a short period, you have a long-term responsibility for managing and caring for your collections after they have gone.

It is also important to ensure that agreements covering the time that the production company is at the museum are in writing and understood by all. Similarly, any alterations and/or additional requirements must be effectively communicated ideally in writing.

Related Topics

Advice Sheet 1

Guidance on IPR in museum image collections

Advice Sheet 3

Exploiting the museum's IPR and cultural assets for financial benefit

Advice Sheet 4

Securing IPR as part of good museum collections management and documentation

Advice Sheet 5

Further information on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

What do I do first?

Respond to the initial request which may have been by telephone or in person from someone working for the production company as a location finder. Decide within the museum who will be responsible as the point of contact.

Find out the type of filming being proposed. **What is the programme / film about?** Will the footage directly publicise the museum? Or is the museum being approached because it provides a good setting or viewpoint?

If the museum and/or its collection is being publicized, then it might best be handled as a press issue, in that it would hopefully benefit the museum by publicising its collections, activities and services.

If the producers have already identified the museum as presenting a unique and exclusive vantage point, backdrop or location for a particular kind of footage it is likely that commercial opportunities exist. Similarly, the museum might hold a unique object in its collection that the producer might want to refer to.

Find out who you will be dealing with. Ask the production company to send a brief **email** with its details and information about the proposed filming, including a range of proposed dates and timings and what they intend to film and in what way? In addition to clarifying the nature of the filming,

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sending an email means that contact is established with a named responsible person and that the company is serious about taking its proposal forward.

Consider who else within your museum or organisation you may need to consult with for approval and/or guidance and who might need to be involved because of the nature of the proposal e.g. conservators, curators, technical staff/contractors or in house publicity/marketing staff.

Locally, Screen Yorkshire (<http://www.screenyorkshire.co.uk>) can work with the museum to facilitate relationships between production companies and museum locations. It also maintains a locations database which includes museums and heritage venues.

You may wish to consider some additional points before going ahead:

- Can you lend (or hire) an in-house expert to provide advice or even commentary or a 'piece to camera'?
- What are the public relations repercussions if the footage content is likely to be controversial?
- Is the production company reputable?
- How long is the filming likely to take?
- Might the filming conflict with other things going on in the museum?
- Can the safety of the museum's collection, its staff and the general public be absolutely guaranteed?
- Does copyright need to be cleared in any of the objects in the museum's collection and who will take responsibility for it?
- Will the work result in significant disruption to the museum's visitors and/or staff?
- Will all or part of the museum need to close down and will there be any cost implications of this?
- What are the financial and or publicity benefits to the museum? Could the filming be beneficial /detrimental to the museum's reputation?
- What additional work for the staff will the filming cause?
- Are there any unusual requests e.g. for naked flames (candles, open fires etc.) or special effects (e.g. smoke/mist generators) use of collection items as "props" or the introduction of props from outside the museum which may have conservation implications or be considered unacceptable?
- Do you or the production company have the necessary level of insurance to cover any accidents or damage?

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- Will the filming be using animals or small children for which extra precautions may need to be put in place?
- **What do I do next?**

Decide on whether the request should be handled **free of charge (if publicising the museum) or whether it should be charged for**. If charged for, determine an hourly location fee that covers all the museum's costs, including staff time in processing the request and accompanying the film and generates an appropriate financial benefit. Negotiate this with a named responsible individual in the production company.

Once fees are agreed, contact museum colleagues to find whether the filming times clash with anything else happening in the museum. Filming should usually take place outside museum opening hours so as not to impinge on visitor enjoyment. Arranging for filming to take place before the museum opens ensures the crew works towards an immovable deadline.

If filming outside museum opening hours is not an option, visitor enjoyment and privacy need to be protected, as they might be interrupted by a film crew's activities. Consider displaying prominent notices to advise visitors that filming is taking place temporarily within a given space. If building closure is required the fee might include an additional element for loss of income or service disruption.

When timings, location and fees are all settled in principle, a **formal agreement** should be signed along the lines of the suggested document (see suggested draft filming template, or see many other examples on-line).

When setting up the practical arrangements ensure that there are clearly identified responsible persons and points of contact between the museum and the production company. It must be clear who can ask for and who approves any variations to the filming arrangements/agreement/contract and how this is recorded if it has any contractual implications. When the filming project is underway ensure all museum staff involved in the filming are informed what is required from them and what restrictions may be imposed on others required by a "closed set" or other site activities of the production company.

- **What are some other pointers?**

Film production companies can be big operations that take over your museum. They work to their own timescales and own practices so **be prepared to be flexible** to accommodate overruns and additional requests. However, consider additional charges for further facility requests and extra time for extra costs which may result. Be prepared to be professionally assertive when required.

It's essential to include in an **agreement** that, whilst copyright in the resulting footage will belong to the film company, no transfer of copyright in any of the museum's assets is conferred to the production company. Nor should the footage be used for other purposes beyond the programme, or re-used out of context. The museum should also ensure that the production company agrees to prominently credit the museum in the final footage. Ideally, the museum itself should be granted permission to play the film, but this is not always the case!

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Think about joining or setting up a **local film location network group**. You could set up a website of potential filming venues within the Yorkshire museum family or develop a useful working relationship with Screen Yorkshire.

If you're unable to provide a filming venue on a particular occasion for whatever reason, **supplying stills digitally is another option** for some kinds of use. The production company may have specific objects in mind, and so these could always be supplied under licence from the museum with the aim of fulfilling at least some of the client's requirements and thereby fostering relations for the future.

- **Where can I find out more?**

Please refer to the other Advice Sheets in the series as well as the following templates: **Advice Sheet 7: Filming Contract Template; Advice Sheet 6: Reproduction Fees for Museums' including Filming Location Fees** and **Advice Sheet 8: Template Licence and Terms and Conditions for the Commercial Supply of Images**. Organizations like The National Trust have considerable experience in this field and may be able to provide additional advice and have their own templates for terms and conditions for filming.

- **Checklist**

1. **Make sure you fully understand what is being filmed, when, by whom and for what purposes**
2. **Assess the filming request in terms of possible disruption to your museum, staff, collections and visitors**
3. **Decide on the possible benefits of the filming to your museum and whether you should be charging**
4. **Make sure all possible filming requirements and related activity are outlined and agreed in writing before any filming or activities associated with the filming commence**
5. **If you set a fee, you should take into account all possible staff time associated with the filming and related activities (before, during and after the filming has taken place), use of facilities, possible disruption to museum opening times and any other costs, as well as profit!**

- **Final point to remember**

Don't get star struck – or intimidated by well known producers or production companies. Venue hire for filming and TV productions can be an important source of revenue, and repeat business, if handled calmly and professionally.

Working with production companies can be demanding but fun!

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