



Anaesthesia Heritage Centre, London

The Work of Medical Museums:

Collaborative approaches to understanding methods, outcomes and implications for wellbeing

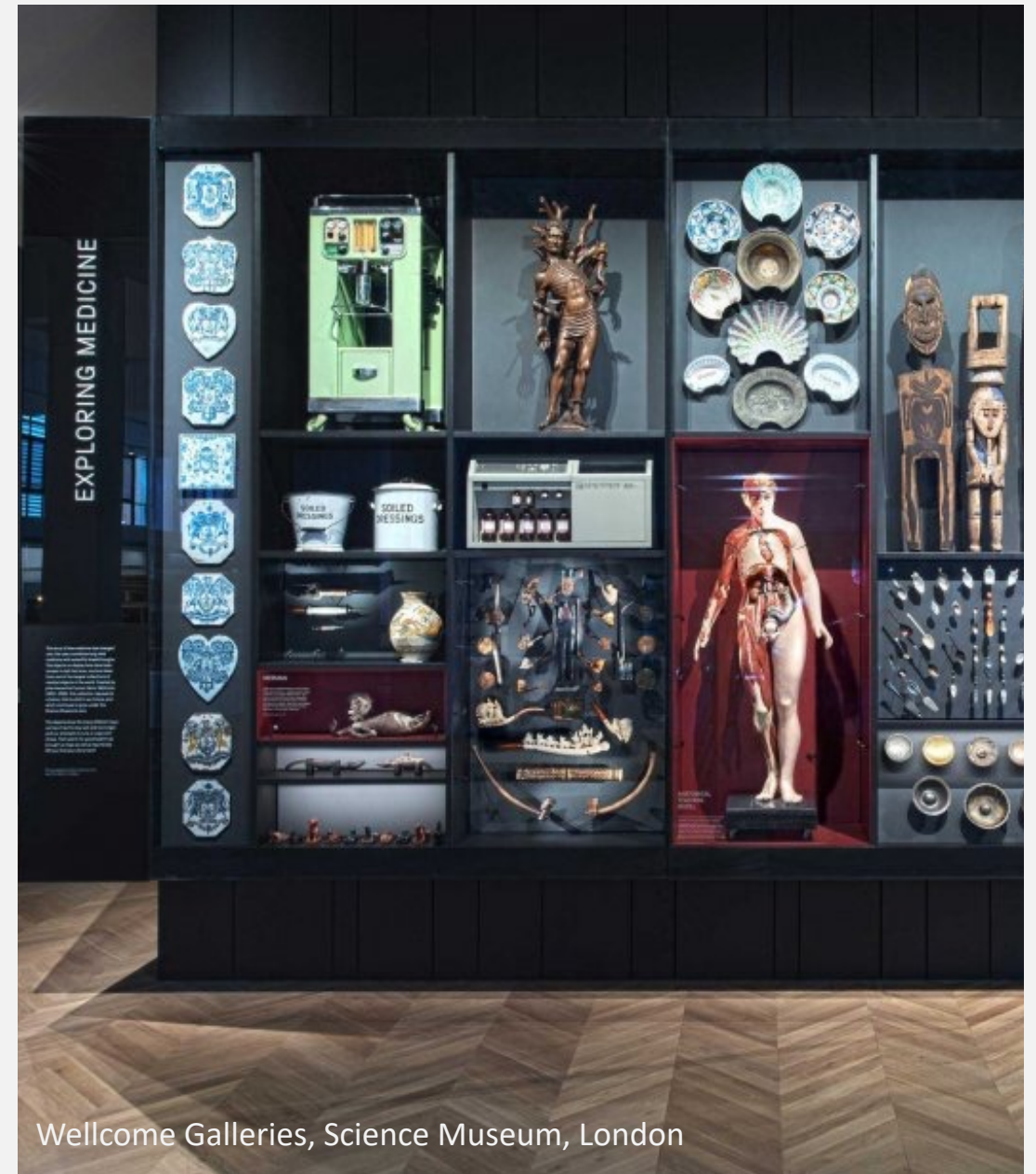
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Project Summary

- Medical museums as particular institutions
 - Defining through permanent collections that focus on bodies and tools of medical practice
 - Rooted in a particular history or heritage (i.e. pathology collections)
 - What makes these institutions distinct and valuable for visitors?
- Increasing public interest and investment
 - Science Museum £24 million redesign of Wellcome Galleries, 2019
 - Surgeons' Hall Museums £4.4 million Heritage Lottery Funded redesign, 2021
 - Thackray Museum of Medicine £4.1 million renovation, 2021



Wellcome Galleries, Science Museum, London

Research Questions

- Why do members of the public visit medical museums? What do they feel they gain from these visits?
- What does the use of this particular past, these items and/or narratives, do that may be different from what occurs at other museums or heritage sites?
- How do medical museums fit into conversations around heritage ethics? What best practices can be proposed for ethical work in heritage museums?
- How do or how can medical museums contribute to individual and societal wellbeing?

Basis for claims - Suggestive Evidence

- Previous research-
 - MA Dissertation: *Affect in Medical Museums: Trauma and Understanding in Heritage Spaces (2019)*
 - Conducted interviews with medical museum staff to better understand specific interpretive approaches and visitor reactions
- Case study: ventilators
 - For presentation at Medicine, Myth and Memory conference (Dec. 2021)
 - Challenge presenting objects that are both life-saving and a source of trauma
 - Example of Catch Your Breath exhibition and intentional engagement with lived experience

The Breathing Box

*Now: an exhibit at the library –
a box with doors which open
to display a cylinder, tubes,
needles, a plunger on top
to blow up 'magic' to inflate
an air duct
to collapse*

my diseased lung and promote healing.

*Back then: I would lie on a table
and wait in dread for the needle
to be inserted, the plunger
to be pressed, while staring
at the ceiling.*

*Now: I stare at the scarring
of pin holes left after years
of needles. Was all this worth it?*

*Yes.
All to breathe.*

Project Goals

1. Increase understanding and awareness of medical museums as particular institutions in the heritage scholarship
2. Facilitate knowledge exchange between museum professionals, academics and members of the public
3. Contribute to the body of work around museum approaches to potentially fraught or evocative objects and emotional engagement in heritage spaces
4. Contribute to theory around therapeutic practice and healing potential in heritage spaces and museums
5. Produce useful outputs for museum professionals, support ongoing practice
6. Investigate wellbeing impacts and potential in medical museums

Project Goals

- 1. Increase understanding and awareness of medical museums as particular institutions in the heritage scholarship**
 - Investigate the specific histories, goals and approaches of these institutions
 - Through working with research partners, archival research, exhibition analysis and collecting visitor feedback focusing on qualitative engagement
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- 2. Facilitate knowledge exchange between museum professionals, academics and members of the public**
 - Through data collection – interviewing museum staff and volunteers, in-depth visitor feedback – and data analysis – considering museum approaches, what staff have learned about effective practices, what audiences appreciate about these museums, etc.
 - Through publishing and sharing of results in dissertation, report and outputs for research partners
3. Contribute to the body of work around museum approaches to potentially fraught or evocative objects and emotional engagement in heritage spaces
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- 3. Contribute to the body of work around museum approaches to potentially fraught or evocative objects and emotional engagement in heritage spaces**
 - Through collaboration and data collection (interviews, archival research) prioritizing the expertise of people who have been doing this work
 - Through highlighting the nature and history of medical museum practice and putting in the context of existing museum and heritage scholarship
4. Contribute to theory around therapeutic practice and healing potential in heritage spaces and museums
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 - Specifically based in person-object encounters and emotional engagement
 - Through data collection and analysis – what kind of work is happening in these spaces? What outcomes or efficacies can be determined?
 - Through placing results in conversation with existing scholarship – what can we learn from medical museum practices that helps support this broader area of research?
5. Produce useful outputs for museum professionals, support ongoing practice
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- 5. Produce useful outputs for museum professionals, support ongoing practice**
 - Through collaboration – formative input on what data collection, analysis and outputs would be most useful for museum practice
 - Produce report for museums that will be broadly available to the public from project website
 - Specific outputs for partner museums (assessment frameworks, analysis of existing data, etc.)
6. Investigate wellbeing impacts and potential in medical museums

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 - Through synthetic analysis of existing theory
 - Data collection prioritizing in-depth, reflective, qualitative assessment of visitor engagement
 - Through analyzing results in the context of existing wellbeing frameworks (NEF)

Project Design – Methodology

- Case study methodology – research partners as case studies
 - Possible addition of others at a later date
- Archival and ethnographic sources
- Qualitative and quantitative data
- Data assessment
 - Thematic analysis of qualitative data
 - Will place in context of existing wellbeing frameworks

Project Design – Research partners

Anaesthesia Heritage Centre



Old Operating Theatre Museum & Herb Garret



Collaborative approach →

First contacted in Fall 2020, confirmed partnerships and terms Fall 2021
Input throughout project design
Assisting with data collection; access to archives and existing visitor data
Goal to produce specific outputs for each partner

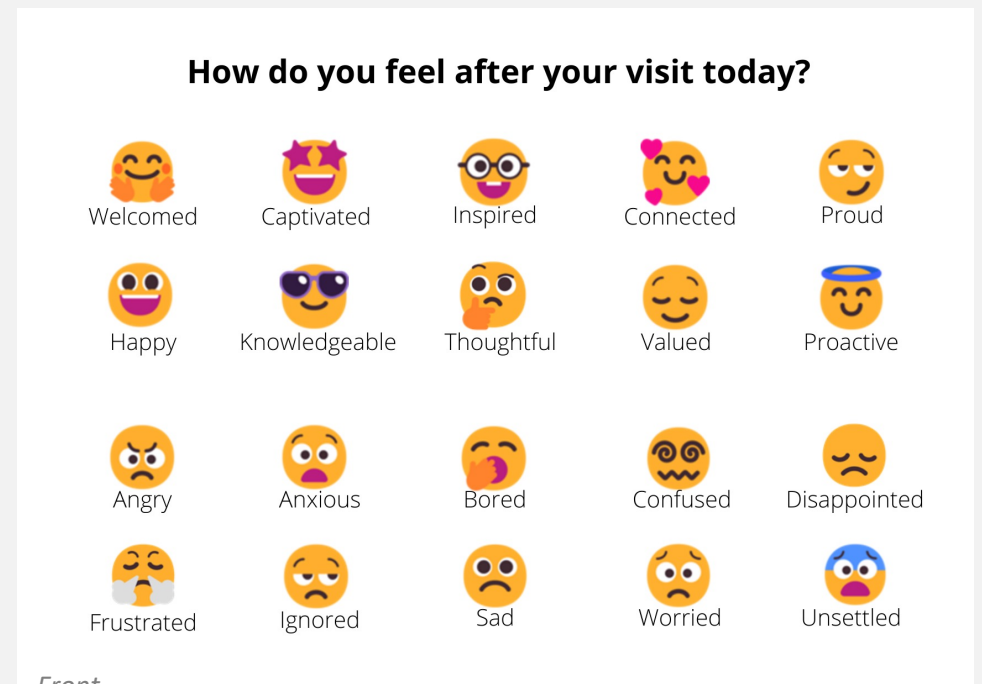
Project Design – Data collection

- Archival research
 - Museum archives (founding documents, board reports, etc.)
 - Other sources discussing museum practice (reviews, newspaper articles, etc)
- Semi-structured interviews with museum professionals, museum volunteers and other experts
- Quantitative and qualitative data related to visitor experience
 - Observation in museum galleries
 - Surveys (in person and online)
 - Semi-structured interviews with museum visitors
 - In-gallery sources of feedback (comment walls)

* waiting for ethics approval, submitted January 2022. Have received preliminary feedback and expecting approval soon.
- Analysis of previously collected visitor data at partner institutions
 - Visitor numbers, event attendance, etc.
 - Visitor surveys
 - Audience observation
 - Collections of visitor comments

Project Design – Comment Cards

- Goal to assess visitor responses with focus on emotions.
 - Allowing to select a variety of emotions to show complexities of engagement.
 - Both quantitative (emoji selection) and qualitative (open ended-responses) data.
- Based in Positive Affect Negative Affect scale
 - previous use in studies of museum engagement and wellbeing (Bodley 2012; Chatterjee & Noble 2013)
- Developed through collaboration with partners.
 - Edited list of feeling words to better fit these museums and the project goals.
 - Use of emojis to make widely understandable and approachable.



Front

Would you like to share any other thoughts?

For student research project:
I confirm I am: Under 18 18 or older

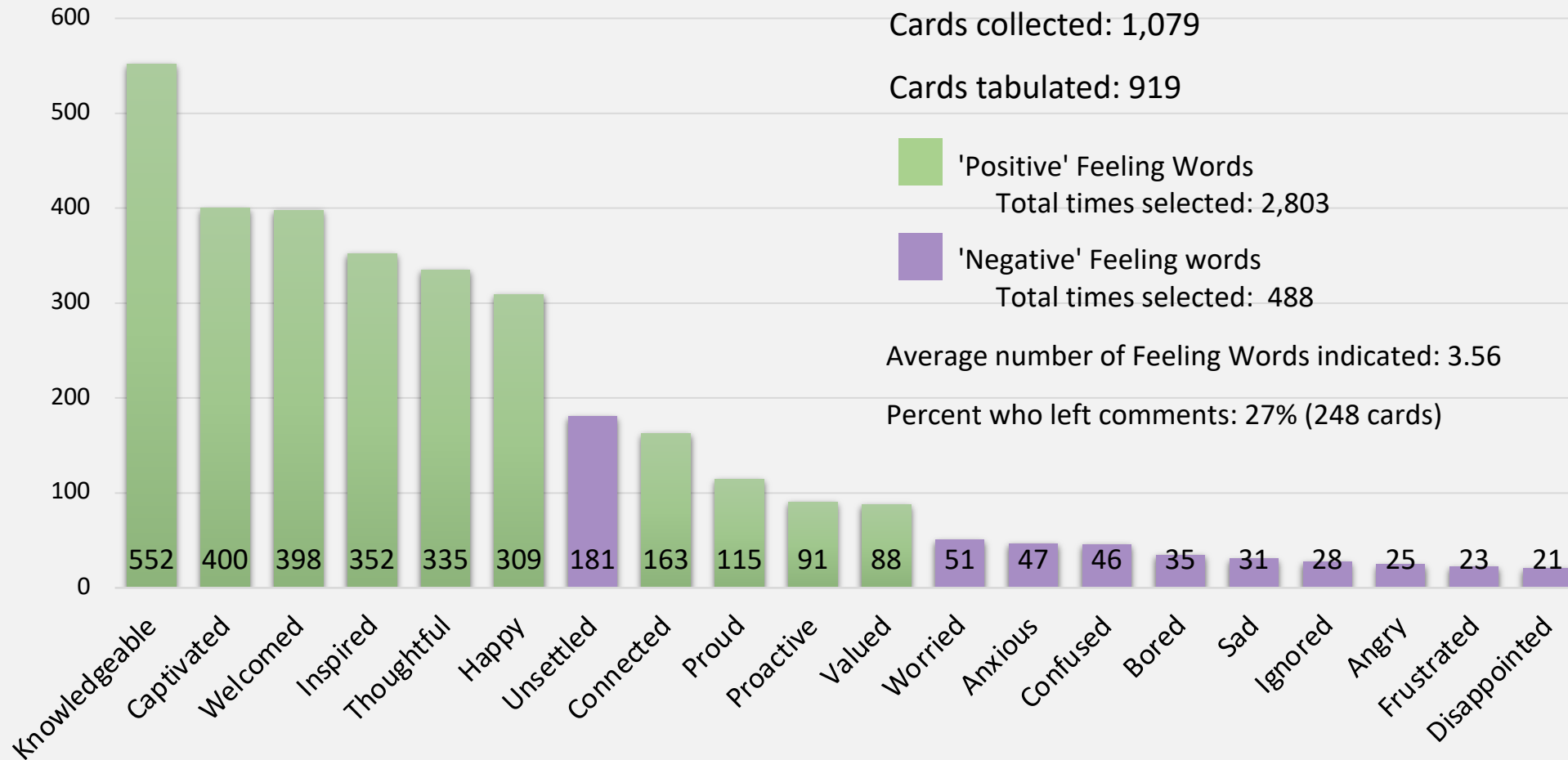
Tick here if you do **not** wish to be included in student research
(PhD research affiliated with UCL, see information sheets displayed)

Back

Project Design – Comment Cards

Collected over 1,000 responses at Old Operating Theatre (May-December 2022)

Preliminary results:



Project Design – Wellbeing Frameworks

- New Economics Foundation – Five Ways to Wellbeing
 - Use in existing museum and wellbeing approaches
 - Cowan, Laird & McKeown 2019
 - Chatterjee & Noble 2013
 - Clini, Thomson & Chatterjee 2019
- Focus on certain ‘actions’
 - Connect
 - Take notice
 - Keep learning
- Other tools from same source supporting consistency across research practice
 - NEF (2012) *Measuring Well-being: A Guide to Practitioners*

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Key theoretical foundations

- Medical museums (Alberti & Hallam 2013; Hallam 2016)
- Human remains in museums – history and ethical concerns (Myra 2013; Richardson 1987; Squires *et al.* 2019)
- Emotion & heritage (Smith 2021; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton & Watson 2017)
 - Difficult/upsetting heritage (Rose 2016; Sather-Wagstaff 2011)
- Trauma theory (Felman & Laub 1992; Herman 2015 [1992])
 - In historical remembrance & museum practice (Arnold-de Simine 2013; Simon *et al.* 2000)
- Heritage as ‘therapy’ (Meskell & Scheermeyer 2008); Heritage efficacies (Butler 2011)
- Wellbeing & museums (Chatterjee & Noble 2013; Cowen *et al.* 2019; Desmarais *et al.* 2018; Falk 2022)
- Object-based practice & therapeutic potential (Kador & Chatterjee 2020; Parry 2020; Schaepe *et al.* 2017)
- Museum studies ethics, theory & practice (Bouquet 2012; Dudley 2010; Macdonald 2006; Marstine 2011)
 - Visitor studies (Falk & Dierking 1992; Falk 2009)
- Anthropology of illness & pain (Bourke 2014; Carel 2016; Kleinman 1988)

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A historical theatrical stage set, likely from the Old Operating Theatre Museum. The stage is a circular wooden platform with a central wooden bench and two chairs. A candelabra hangs from the ceiling. The stage is surrounded by wooden railings with black metal balusters. The background wall is wood-paneled and features a window and a door.

Thank You

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