

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Leicester		
Unit of Assessment: UOA34B		
Title of case study: Advancing LGBTQ equality internationally through cultural institutions		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Jocelyn Dodd Richard Sandell	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Museums for Social Change / Co-Director, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) Professor of Museum Studies, Co-Director, RCMG	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2000–2020 1997–Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Although the past two decades have seen significant advances towards equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, these have very often attracted controversy and sometimes fierce opposition, reflecting the status of LGBTQ rights as one of the most hotly contested global issues. Sandell and Dodd from the University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) have directly responded to this, undertaking research that has given cultural institutions around the world the impetus to engage audiences around LGBTQ heritage and the knowledge, skills and confidence to take up highly influential roles in tackling prejudice and discrimination. Their research with cultural partners has supported the work of equality campaigners and benefitted LGBTQ communities by enriching the way visitors, media and society understand and discuss LGBTQ lives and fostering widespread support for equal rights for all.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>In 2001, Sandell and Dodd began to address the lack of engagement with LGBTQ narratives in museum displays, exhibitions and public programming, purposefully introducing LGBTQ themes in publications that explored shifts in museum thinking and practice towards being more inclusive of previously marginalised, suppressed or overlooked histories [R1, R2, G1].</p> <p>In 2007, in recognition of this research around the representation of LGBTQ lives in museums, RCMG was commissioned to work with Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art to carry out research into their ground-breaking social justice programme [G2]. Dodd and Sandell developed a mixed-methods approach to understand the experiences of LGBTQ communities of collaborating with the Gallery and the impact of the resulting programme on visiting schools, independent visitors, media discourse, governing bodies and equality lobbyists. This research revealed new insights into the capacity for cultural institutions to actively shape public opinion on equality issues [R3, R4]. It revealed strategies to support innovation and experimentation that other cultural organisations could use. Sandell subsequently carried out research over a ten-year period (2006–2016) using in-depth case studies from the UK and US, and contextual examples from diverse international contexts, to explore how museums, galleries and heritage sites of all kinds – through the narratives they construct and publicly present – contribute to shaping the moral and political climate within which LGBTQ rights are experienced, continually sought and fought for. Published in 2016, <i>Museums, Moralities and Human Rights</i> [R4] offered new insights by bringing together, for the first time, the perspectives and experiences not only of those who work in, govern, fund and visit museums but also those of rights activists and campaigners who, at key moments in their struggle, had turned their attention to museums to advance their cause.</p>		

Based on this work, RCMG was approached by the **National Trust** to develop an ambitious, research-led collaboration that would shape and underpin their emerging work on the development of a *Challenging Histories* public programme. Over the course of the research, the scale of the collaboration grew significantly and RCMG became the lead research partner in the award-winning 2017 national public programme *Prejudice and Pride* – that sought to research and reveal previously unknown or suppressed histories of same-sex love and desire and gender diversity across the Trust’s properties in England and Wales [G3]. This research revealed previously untold LGBTQ stories, produced guidance on interpreting queer lives, pioneered new modes of engaging the public around these often-contested histories, experimented with new ways of using histories to build understanding and public support for contemporary LGBTQ equality, and revealed how diverse audiences engage with and respond to challenging histories in heritage settings [R5, R6]. In 2019, the National Trust commissioned RCMG to be lead research partner on *Everyone Welcome*, an organisation-wide transformation programme to develop and embed leading edge approaches to diversity and inclusion for all groups including LGBTQ communities [G4].

3. References to the research

R1. Dodd, J., Sandell, R. (2001) *Including Museums, Perspectives on Museums and Social Inclusion, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, Leicester*: RCMG.

R2. Sandell, R. (2007) *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, London and New York, Routledge.

R3. Sandell, R. (2010) ‘Museums and the Human Rights Frame; in **R. Sandell, R.,** and E. Nightingale, (Eds.) (2010). *Museums, equality and social justice*. London and New York: Routledge.

R4. Sandell, R. (2016), *Museums, Moralities and Human Rights*. London and New York: Routledge.

R5. Sandell, R., Lennon, R. and Smith, M. (eds) (2018) *Prejudice and Pride: LGBTQ heritage and its contemporary implications*, Swindon: National Trust and RCMG.

R6. Dodd, J., Plumb, S., Bergevin, J. and **Sandell, R.** (2018) *Prejudice and Pride An analysis of visitor engagement and response*, Leicester: RCMG. Online. Available at <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/publications/prejudice-and-pride-an-analysis-of-visitor-engagement-and-response>

G1. *Including Museums/Small museums and Social Inclusion*. Investigator: **Jocelyn Dodd**. Resource: the council for museums, libraries and archives, October 2000 – March 2001, GBP10,000.

G2. *Evaluation of the Social Justice Programme of the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (GoMA)*. Investigators: **Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd**. Glasgow Museums, January 2009 – September 2010, GBP15,000.

G3. *Prejudice and Pride: revealing LGBTQ lives with the National Trust*. Investigators: **Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd**. The National Trust, September 2016 – May 2019, GBP93,301.

G4. *Everyone Welcome*. Investigators: Suzanne MacLeod, **Richard Sandell**. National Trust, 2019–2022, GBP167,695.

4. Details of the impact

Impact has been created through a collaborative approach that brings researchers, culture practitioners, LGBTQ communities and equality campaigners together to shape new research-led practice that explicitly and purposefully tackles contemporary inequalities, prejudice and discrimination and builds knowledge, capacity and confidence amongst cultural organisations.

Inspiring and shaping new museum thinking and practice internationally: The research has stimulated increasing attention amongst museums, galleries and heritage institutions around LGBTQ history and culture that has been previously overlooked or avoided. An independent study of culture sector professionals carried out in 2019/20 (n.83 survey respondents/10 in-depth interviews) found extensive evidence of the impact of RCMG’s research on thinking and practice in the UK and internationally [E1]. 86% of respondents said that RCMG had influenced them or their organisation. Specifically, 79% of respondents stated that the research had developed their confidence in this area of work and 71% of respondents stated that the research had supported them to do more and/or better LGBTQ-related activity. 96% stated that the Centre’s research

had positively impacted the museum and heritage sector [E1]. Founder of the award-winning LGBTQ tours at the Victoria and Albert Museum states that, without RCMG research, “we wouldn’t have the LGBTQ working groups, we wouldn’t have the LGBTQ tours”. A curator at Historic Royal Palaces describes the research as “transformative” [E1]. Professor Sandell was appointed to advisory boards at the **Burrell Collection**, the **Pitt Rivers Museum** and the **Royal Air Force Museum** where he advised on LGBTQ interpretation. He accepted invitations to share his research with LGBTQ staff working groups at the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, **National Museums Liverpool** and **National Trust**. Head of Interpretation and Volunteers at the **British Museum** asked Sandell to review object selection and help to shape interpretive text for the Museum’s first ever LGBTQ-themed exhibition, *Desire, Love, Identity*. He stated: “Professor Sandell’s research into how museums shape, inform and facilitate dialogue about difference has been extremely beneficial to recent work at the British Museum to develop displays and public programming with LGBTQ themes. In particular, [R4] ‘Museums, Moralities and Human Rights’ informed work on the recent British Museum exhibition and trail I co-curated, ‘Desire, Love, Identity: exploring LGBTQ histories’, shaping our thinking for the display during the formative stages” [E2]. It is estimated that half a million people encountered some part of the project at the British Museum. The exhibition was adapted and toured to five other UK museums where it was seen by a further 260,000 people [E1].

As research partner to the **National Trust** on their ground-breaking national programme in 2017, RCMG transformed the organisation’s capacity and confidence to tackle LGBTQ stories for the first time. The Trust’s National Public Programmes Research Manager stated: “[Sandell] was involved from the very earliest thinking about what Prejudice and Pride might look like nationally. [...] We agreed to bring RCMG in to help us, particularly around working with property teams and to supply them with some kind of support and guidance, and particularly confidence, to programme LGBTQ activity” [E1]. The success of *Prejudice and Pride* had a transformative effect across the National Trust. Building on the programme, the Trust developed *Everyone Welcome*, an organisation wide drive to advance equality and inclusion that specifically features LGBTQ work, appointing RCMG as research partner [E1]. In 2015, inspired by and drawing on RCMG research, a new queer museological initiative **Museo Q** was founded in Colombia, which aims to recover and display histories and memories of LGBTQ+ people as an essential part of the national story. This led, in 2019, to the opening of the first permanent exhibition to feature LGBTQ objects and themes at the **National Museum of Colombia**, showcasing the first T-Shirt that **Museo Q** used in 2015 at Pride in Bogota, along with other LGBT-collections [E3]. In 2020, RCMG accepted invitations to share insights from its LGBTQ research with museums outside the UK through its role as international partner to **The Federation of International Human Rights Museums Asia Pacific (FIHRM-AP)**, hosted by Taiwan’s **National Human Rights Museum** [E4], and as contributor to the **lab.Bode: Initiative to Strengthen Museum Education**. lab.Bode is a laboratory inside the Bode-Museum in Berlin, created by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, that comprises a national training programme at twenty-three museums, and accompanying public discussion programmes that together serve to showcase leading education work in museums and what it can achieve) [E5].

The Head of Human Rights at the **Montreal Holocaust Museum** in Canada drew attention to the convening power of RCMG’s research: the invaluable role it has played internationally in enabling people to come together around good practice, a feature that was seen to be particularly beneficial for people who were doing LGBTQ work in isolation within an organisation. He commented: “I find that it provides that frame of reference and articulation to really bring everything together ... That’s important, because sometimes in our institutions it feels that we’re the only ones doing this work. We feel alone, we feel hopeless, we feel that we’re not going anywhere ... The RCMG has an important role in being a hub for all of us to come and join forces” [E1].

Enriching and informing public opinion and attitudes towards LGBTQ people/equality:

The research has engaged large and diverse audiences and significantly shaped public attitudes and opinion on LGBTQ equality. Through collaboration with the **National Trust** (2016-2018), 12 Trust properties in England and Wales presented new stories reaching 353,553 visitors and

promoted these at 17 Pride events that were attended by 2,022,950 people. The programme generated over 500 press and media mentions [E6]. Although some accounts in national newspapers claimed that the Trust's tackling of LGBTQ themes was hugely unpopular with members, volunteers and the wider public, the Trust's large-scale survey of visitors between March and November 2017 (n. 4,195) revealed a positive impact (an unprecedented increase from 44-51%) in terms of strengthening perceptions of the National Trust as *"telling stories of diverse culture and heritage"* [E6]. A detailed mixed-methods study of audience responses (n. 1,683) showed that 71% supported the Trust's celebration of sexual and gender diversity and revealed the extensive – sometimes transformative – impact on visitors' thinking and attitudes towards LGBTQ people [E7]. For example, a 76-year-old wrote after encountering the installation at the National Trust house Kingston Lacy that it *"had a profound effect on us. That such a display should have proved so controversial must indicate the residual strength of homophobia in this country. Things are changing and in our view will be greatly helped by such strong displays as that at Kingston Lacy"* [E7].

Informing cultural policy: In a study of sector professionals in 2020 (n.83 survey respondents/10 in-depth interviews), over a third of respondents reported that RCMG's research had supported their organisations to develop strategy or policy relating to LGBTQ equality [E1]. In the UK, this included the **National Trust for Scotland**, **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, **Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales**, and the **Association of Leading Visitor Attractions**. Beyond the UK this included the **National Museum of Ireland**, the **Centre of Democracy in Australia**, and the **Technisches Museum Wien** in Austria [E1]. For example, in response to recognition that LGBTQ heritage was underrepresented in their funding awards and a growing concern around rising LGBTQ hate crime, the Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight at **National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)**, invited Sandell to share his research through a blog for the NLHF website. As she comments, the blog generated huge engagement and this success enabled her *"to lobby internally for a higher profile of LGBTQ heritage"* in the funder's communications. This led to a two-month season in 2019 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots allowing the NLHF to *"reach a wider range of communities and to challenge discrimination"* [E1].

Dodd and Sandell's research has directly informed cultural policy that has aimed to encourage cultural institutions in the Netherlands and Sweden to develop more inclusive and equitable approaches to LGBTQ communities, culture and equality. Sandell was interviewed by the **Swedish Museums Agency** in 2014 and cited throughout their report, *Museums and LGBTQ: An analysis of how museums and other exhibitors can highlight lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer perspectives* [E8], helping the government-funded agency to identify the barriers to engaging with LGBTQ themes and strategies for overcoming them. In the following year, Sandell was invited to contribute to *Queering the Collections*, a symposium and publication initiated by IHLIA, a Dutch government-funded organization that collects and presents LGBTQ heritage with the Reinwardt Academy, The Amsterdam Museum and the International Council of Museums' International Committee for Collecting [E9].

Enriching the work of LGBTQ equality campaigners and service providers: RCMG's research has revealed the untapped potential for museums and cultural institutions to be engaged in broader efforts to secure equal rights for LGBTQ communities. At a time when homophobic and transphobic hate crimes have been on the rise, equality campaigners have been inspired and supported to see the unique role that museums and heritage sites can play in stimulating debate and building broader public and political support for contested equality issues. The research collaborations have generated widespread debate in national and international media. Working with the **National Trust** the team researched the life of Robert Wyndham Ketton Cremer, the last squire of Felbrigg Hall, producing a six-minute film, narrated by Stephen Fry, that acknowledged his homosexuality and discussed this in the context of his life and times. The launch of the film in July 2017 sparked a national level media debate, which, at its height, was in more than 100 news outlets. The significance of this was recognised by the Chief Executive of **Stonewall**, the UK's leading LGBT equality body who in 2017 commented: *"[Prejudice and Pride] is a really important moment in the National Trust's history and we at Stonewall are really*

proud of what the National Trust has achieved in collaboration with Leicester University. It's really important to celebrate LGBT equality and LGBT lives. ...The more positive depictions of LGBT people, the more we talk about LGBT people, the more we can say we exist and we always have done and always will do, the better our communities feel" [E10].

The Equality activist, co-founder of **Stonewall** and former Secretary-General of the International Lesbian and Gay Association invited Sandell to present RCMG's research at the Welsh Senedd for LGBT History Month in 2019 to an audience of Assembly members, school pupils and equality activists. She reported "*excellent formal feedback, a very high level of engagement, interest and satisfaction*", and commented that the impact of RCMG's research was that it enabled her to "*see that crossover line between academic history and engaging people in lively, new forms of showing history*" [E1]. "*It's only recently that we have started to lift the veil on our past and that young people have had examples of being both queer and leading a full and creative life. It's vital that these stories are uncovered ... LGBT history that reaches out to people, like *Girl Boy Child* [part of *Prejudice and Pride*, initiated and led by RCMG], that presents us in ways that are accessible, inspiring and entertaining alongside educational are vital. This work helps to develop us as strong and confident people who are connected to the world and is more vital today than ever before*" [E11].

A Sexual Health Adviser and Educational Specialist at the **Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust** has used RCMG's research and public engagement at Kingston Lacy, a National Trust property in Dorset, in educational sessions addressing sexuality and homophobia that, since November 2017, have been delivered at schools across Dorset to various age groups ranging from Year 8 (12 years of age) upwards; and reaching over 1,000 pupils to date (4 March 2019) [E12]. The research has been life-changing for many LGBTQ people, especially young people, who value the visibility of LGBTQ narratives in the public realm and the support of heritage bodies. A National Trust visitor wrote to express their thanks "*for helping to give voice to LGBTQ+ history. As a young gay man I had so few visible role models. I hope that any young LGBTQ+ people visiting your *Prejudice and Pride* events get the important message that they are not alone. Our history is important [sic] and it's right that we are talking more about it*" [E7].

Driving forward change in the heritage sector: In February 2020, RCMG was invited to be a founding partner – alongside **Historic Royal Palaces, Historic England, English Heritage** and the **National Trust** of the **Queer Heritage and Collections Network**, a sector-wide network to provide training, networking and peer support to people working with LGBTQ+ collections and histories, established with a grant from the Art Fund. Within its first few months, the network had 56 institutional members across the UK and overseas members in Germany and the Netherlands [E13].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

E1. Mailhac, C. (2020) *Advancing LGBTQ equality through cultural institutions*.

E2. Head of Interpretation and Volunteers, British Museum testimonial.

E3. Museo Q testimonial.

E4. Federation of Human Rights Museums Asia Pacific statement.

E5. Lab.Bode contributor agreement.

E6. *Prejudice and Pride* National Trust infographic.

E7. Dodd, J., Plumb, S., Bergevin, J. and Sandell, R. (2018) *Prejudice and Pride An analysis of visitor engagement and response*, RCMG.

E8. Swedish Museums Agency (2016), *Museums and LGTQ: An analysis of how museums and other exhibitors can highlight lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer perspectives*.

E9. IHLIA, *Queering the Collections*.

E10. Chief Executive of Stonewall film transcript.

E11. Co-founder, Stonewall, testimonial, 11 March 2019.

E12. Sexual Health Adviser and Educational Specialist, Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust testimonial.

E13. Queer Heritage and Collections Network article.