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School Visits Post-lockdown II: The Role of Digital A Follow-on Survey Report

On site visits have allowed children to have engaging educational experiences in what has been a difficult 18 months of online learning.

Inspired by the surge of creativity and skill sharing that Covid brought - we now are more proactive and knowledgeable in looking at new ways to engage and educate.

Online digital offers must not duplicate hands-on visits or we will shoot ourselves in the foot.

a lot of our educational material was lost in the digital white

A talk ... originally planned as an in-person [for] a maximum audience of 120 people, was actually watched by more than 700 students in their school classrooms with participation through Q&A and polls

it was a steep (but fantastic!) learning curve for us all

I hope that ... actually we are, as a sector, more confident and savvy to develop more engaging, creative and dynamic digital engagement opportunities - as much as we do 'in person' ones.

the pandemic has helped us to refine our offer and closely scrutinise our programmes so they are better

Schools are enquiring about purely digital only rather than in person, so some control is taking place around this to ensure they still visit in person.

We created STEAM themed craft and activity bags for pupils ... whose parents accessed food banks .. so that children could participate in the masses of online activities that sprung up.

[the] museum was closed and upon reopening schools are still asking for virtual field trips



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Executive Summary

We report findings from the follow-on survey “School Visits Post-Lockdown II” by the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. We surveyed museum educators and other museum professionals who are involved in the planning and/or delivery of school visits. The survey aimed to understand the extent and modes of use of digital technologies and tools in the delivery of school visits to museums during the covid19 pandemic, and the future prospects for blended school visits that we can discern from their implementation during the pandemic. The survey remained open between 21 June and 13 September 2021 and received 44 responses. The main findings are:

- The importance of school visits for museums has overall not deteriorated during the pandemic.
- For some museums, the pandemic did break down links with schools that were not visiting frequently, but it seems to have strengthened relationships with frequently visiting schools.
- The pandemic context seems to have given museums the time and impetus to consult with their school audiences and develop a more flexible schools offer that matches school needs.
- While a small minority (14%) of museums did not host school visits in this period, the majority continued to host schools in person, remotely or a combination. Nevertheless, some museum-school links were broken
- During the pandemic, hands-on and interactive activities that previously featured in school visits seem to have given way to digital activities and other covid-secure alternatives, including blended in-person and remote activities.
- The importance of digital activities in the museum school offer peaked during the pandemic and is likely to remain high post-pandemic.
- Ensuring that school visits were covid safe often involved a rethink of logistics, including giving schools exclusive use of the museum site during school visit hours. Other covid safety measures included sanitation of handling objects and resources, one-way traffic systems, and prohibiting hands-on interactions.
- The pandemic context prompted many museums to rethink the purpose of their schools offer and to expand its objects to include student and teacher wellbeing.
- Main concerns in developing digital activities for school groups included issues of pedagogy (i.e. how to maintain the benefits of physical interactions with objects and artifacts and social interactions with museum experts), staff digital capabilities and capacity, adequacy of school and museum technical infrastructure, and socio-technical issues (i.e. digital poverty, the practicalities of home working, and ‘digital white noise’).
- Digital activities and blended school visits during the pandemic enabled museums to extend their geographic reach and to scale up school participation.
- Museum education staff saw the need for digital skills development as a valuable challenge that pushed them to innovate pedagogies and methods.
- Participants overwhelmingly agreed that there is a future for blended school visits post-pandemic, particularly in regard to the use of digital activities to extend class engagement to before and after the in-person visit, and to enrich the latter.
- The pandemic seems to have created the conditions for museums to reinvent the school visit as a blended experience. Central to this will be the collection of hard evidence of the pedagogical effectiveness blended visits.

Introduction

In spring 2020, just as the covid19 pandemic begun to change our personal and professional lives, we surveyed museum educators about the impacts of the pandemic on school museum visits and the role they anticipated that digital would play in the aftermath of the lockdowns¹. Over the summer of 2021, as social distancing restrictions were coming to an end, we launched a follow-on survey to see the extent to which digital activities and engagement had been used in the previous year, the challenges they presented museums with, and the opportunities that they have raised for the future.

The survey was designed and administered electronically via the JISC Online Surveys platform. Information about the survey and calls for participants were disseminated via social media and the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) discussion list. The survey remained open between 21 June 2021 and 13 September 2021. It comprised 29 questions in total, of which 11 were open, 5 were Likert-scale questions, and 13 were single choice (2) or multiple select (11) questions. These focused on the disruptions, challenges and changes in school visits as a result of covid19 and covered three main thematic sections ('Pre-pandemic school visit offer'; 'During the pandemic school visit offer'; and 'Post-pandemic school visit offer'), with a preamble section capturing the general context and one additional section related to participants' profiles. The survey included a cover page which explained the purposes and outlined the focus of the questions and asked for participant consent. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

The 2020 survey had a similar structure, with three main thematic sections: 'Pre-covid19 school visit offer'; 'Post-lockdown school visit plans'; and 'Digital activities and school visits post-lockdown'. It is important to note the difference in the descriptions of the timeframes that the two surveys focused on. The 'post-lockdown' period that the 2020 survey referred to became the 'during the pandemic' period in the 2021 survey. We are therefore able to compare what respondents in 2020 anticipated was going to happen, with what respondents in 2021 had seen happen in terms of changes to school visits to museums while waves of the pandemic were coming and going. The 'post-pandemic' section again attempts to gauge future directions for blended school museum experiences. The inherent vagueness that still surrounds this timeframe is reflected in the responses which, even in the generally optimistic climate of the UK's 'unlocking' over the summer, seem to acknowledge that 'post-pandemic' is more likely to mean 'when restrictions come and go as needed' than 'when restrictions are gone for good'.

The 2021 survey had 44 responses. The following sections present data and findings from the analysis of these responses. More specifically, section 2 contextualises the data through an analysis of respondent profiles. Section 3 presents data and findings from the three main sections of the survey. Section 4 concludes the report with a summary of findings. Throughout, comparisons are made with 2020 findings where applicable.

¹ See Vavoula & Anastopoulou (2020). School Visits Post-lockdown: The Role of Digital. A Survey Report. University of Leicester. Report. <https://hdl.handle.net/2381/12661649.v1>

Respondent profiles

We asked respondents to describe their museum roles; these related to education, learning, outreach, engagement and schools (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Word cloud of categories of respondent role descriptions

In order to gauge the respondents' involvement in the planning and delivery of school visits and other public engagement activities, we asked how often ('regularly', 'occasionally', or 'never') their role requires them to undertake tasks/responsibilities related to these. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the respondents are regularly involved in the planning and/or delivery of both school visits and other public engagement activities; 32% are regularly involved in planning or delivery of school visits but only occasionally or never in other public engagement; 7% are regularly involved in public engagement but only occasionally or never in school visits; and 2% are only occasionally involved in the planning/delivery of either.

We also asked respondents about their current employment situation, in order to contextualise responses related to current thinking within their museum during the lockdown. Of the 44 respondents who answered this question, 32% said that they were working from home at the time they completed the survey; 39% were working on-site; 30% split their time between home and on-site working; and none of them were furloughed.

Findings

Section A. 'Your museum's school visit offer: general context'

"1. In your opinion, how important are school visits to your museum?"

Forty-three (43) respondents answered this question. There was overall agreement among respondents regarding the importance of school visits, with 49% of participants indicating that school visits are very important to their museum, 44% indicating that school visits are important, and 7% indicating that school visits are moderately important. Compared to the 2020 survey, a similar percentage of respondents said that school visits are more than moderately important (96% in 2020, 93% in 2021); however, the percentage of those who placed school visits at the top of the importance scale dropped from 73% in 2020 to 49% in 2021. This may reflect changes to museum-school relationships and related programming that happened during the pandemic.

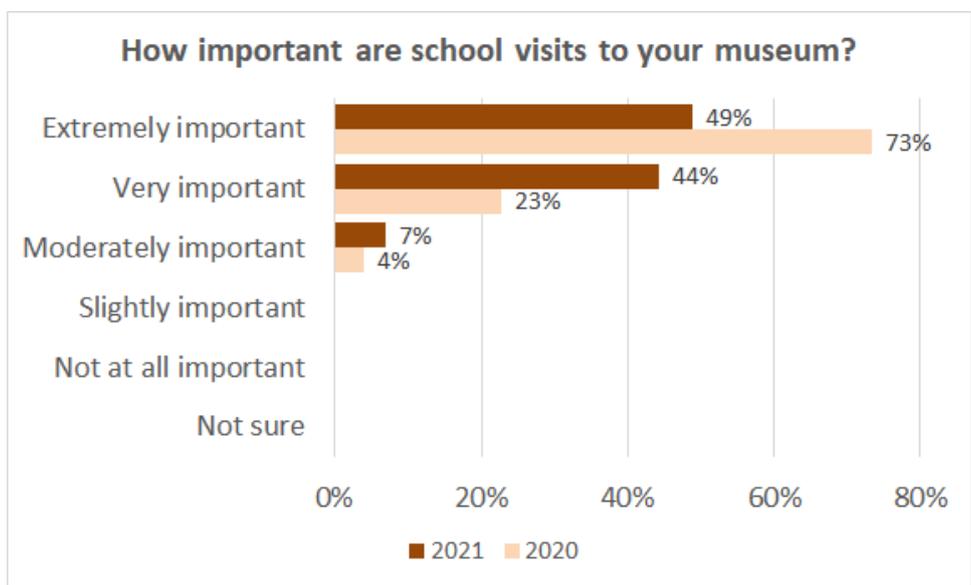


Figure 2. The importance of school visits to the museum

"1a. In your opinion, for which of the following reasons are school visits important to your museum? Tick all that apply?"

Forty-four (44) respondents answered this multiple-select question, which included six categories that emerged from the analysis of responses to a related open-ended question in 2020. The most frequently selected reasons why school visits are important were that they enable the museum to engage with local communities (86%), they are a means for developing new audiences (82%) and they enable the museum to link education with local heritage and history (80%). Fairly frequently selected were that school visits are at the core of the museum mission (70%), they help to increase visitor numbers (61%) and they are an important source of income (50%). Only one respondent selected 'Other', suggesting that school visits allow their specialised museum to introduce their topic to school children early on.

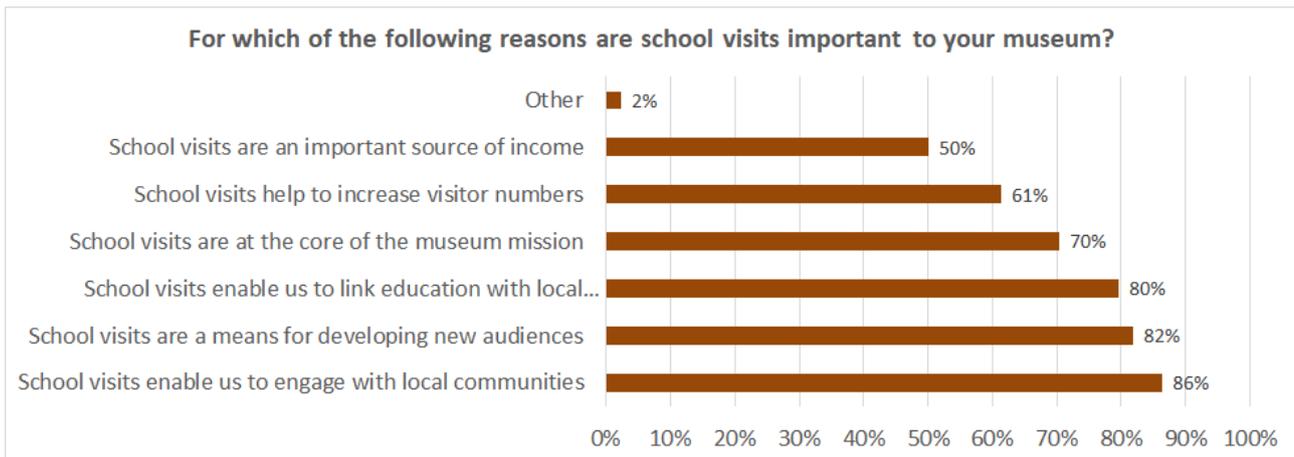


Figure 3. Reasons why school visits are important to the museum

“1b. In your opinion, has the importance of school visits changed for your museum as a result of the pandemic? Please explain.”

Thirty-seven respondents answered this question. The majority (62%) said that the importance of school visits has changed as the result of the pandemic and 38% said that their importance has not changed. One fifth of the respondents (22%) mentioned changes in the scheduling of school visits, with some museums dedicating part of their opening time exclusively to schools and others having to reduce school visits because of staff shortages. For some, the financial return of school visits changed – one museum began prioritising paying schools, and another began to charge for school visits. The return of schools to the museum was also mentioned as an indicator of recovery of visitor confidence. Finally, respondents mentioned changes in the mode and focus of delivery, specifically the delivery of sessions through digital technologies and a focus shift towards health and wellbeing.

Several respondents mentioned the benefits brought by digital means of engagement such as online workshops, virtual and blended visits, video-conferences, etc. These benefits included enabling new school audiences from further afield to engage with the museum, enabling school engagement at a time when in-person visits were impractical, and enriching the museum’s schools offer. In fact, one respondent suggested that digital engagement gave the museum an advantage, as “schools who would not usually visit contact[ed] us to deliver virtual sessions as the museum they would usually visit was not offering school sessions”. Nevertheless, wellbeing and educational benefits for pupils from in-person, out-of-school experiences at a time of increased digital learning was also emphasised in responses. In fact, student wellbeing was mentioned by some respondents as a shift in focus for school visits, with one respondent noting that “some visits have been about students’ wellbeing, which hasn’t necessarily been the case before” and another explaining that “we are thinking about the value of [school visits] in a different way [...] in terms of the well-being curriculum or with cuts to the arts in the curriculum as enriching opportunities”. Finally, in-person school visits have had symbolic value for museums, indicating that “the museum is open again, as a symbol of restart.”

Section B. 'Your museum's school visit offer pre-pandemic'

"2. Which of the following types of activity were included in your museum's pre-pandemic school visit offer?"

Forty-four (44) respondents answered this multiple-select question. Museum educator-guided activities, hands-on activities, and workshops were each selected by over 85% of respondents, with the first two being a nearly universal feature of school visits pre-lockdown (98% and 93% respectively). More than half of the respondents also said that their museum included self-guided student activities, playing with interactive exhibits, gallery tours, trails, teacher-guided activities, and costumed activities and re-enactments. Less frequently selected were critical thinking activities, multisensory activities, demonstrations or lectures, performance and role-play, digital activities and games. Activities mentioned as 'Other' included artist-led activities, shows, and historic building tours.

Hands-on, interactive activities dominated the pre-pandemic school visit to the museum

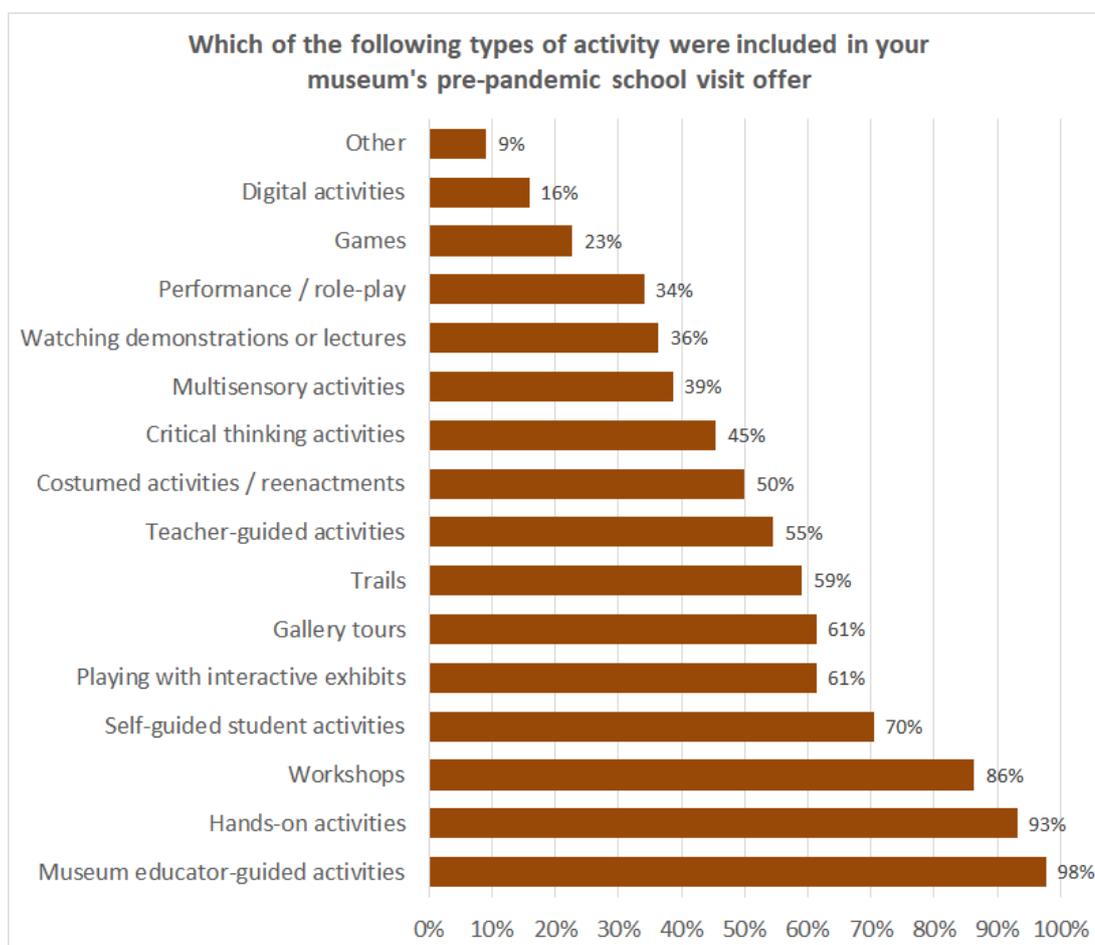


Figure 4. Types of activities included in the museum's pre-pandemic school visit offer

Only 16% of respondents selected 'digital activities' as part of their school offer pre-pandemic. Subsequent questions looked at digital activities more closely.

“3. How important do you think digital activities were in your museum's school offer before the pandemic?”

The next question asked how important digital activities were in the museum’s school offer before the pandemic, in which the majority of respondents (70%) answered either ‘slightly important’ or ‘not at all important’.

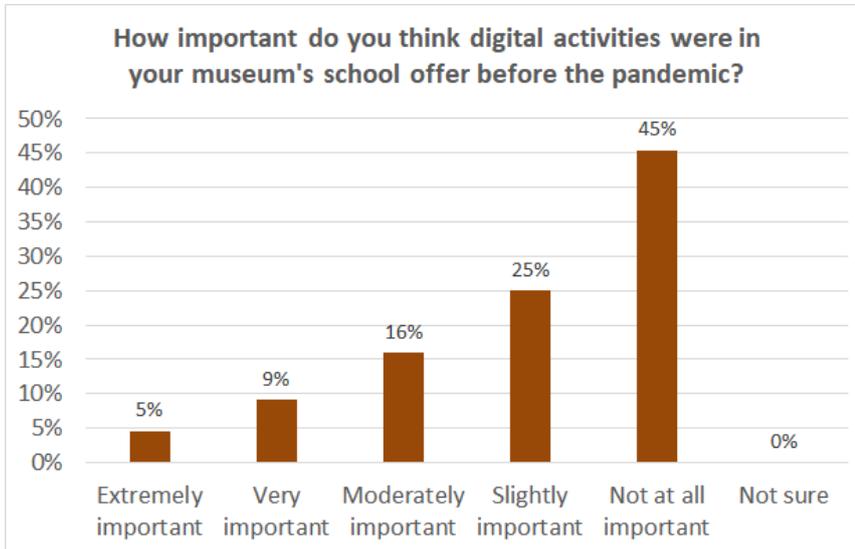


Figure 5. Importance of digital activities for the museum’s school offer

“4. If your museum's pre-pandemic school visit offer included digital activities, which of the following were used?”

Digital teacher resources, social media and online collections dominated museums’ pre-pandemic digital offer for schools

The following multiple-select question asked for more detail on what was included among the museum’s digital activities pre-pandemic, if such activities were offered. Forty (40) respondents answered this question, 40% of whom said that their museum’s school offer did not include digital activities. Another 40% said that their museum offered teacher resources and nearly 40% was using social media. Just under one quarter said that their museum offered access to online collections. Less common were online games and home activities (both at ~11%), live lectures (~7%), virtual tours and educational apps (both at 5%). Finally, one respondent mentioned mobile apps, and another mentioned a digital map activity as part of a workshop.

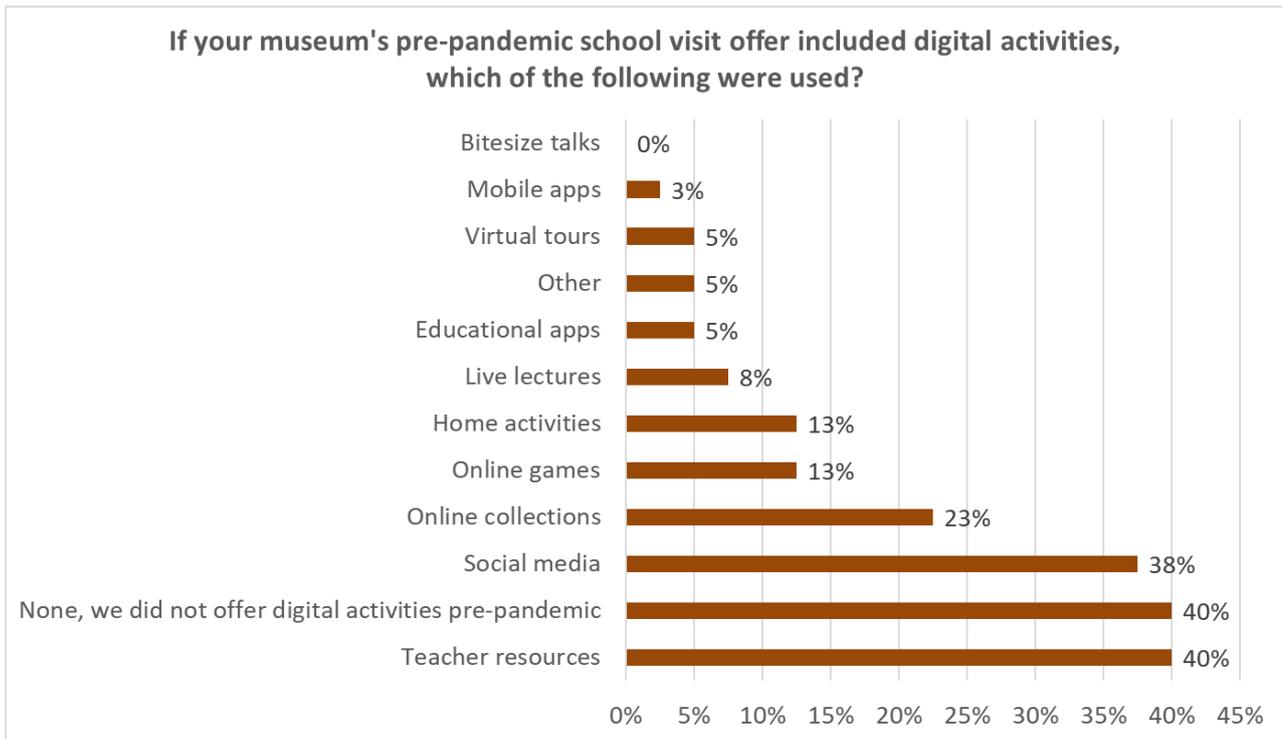


Figure 6. Digital activities used in the museum’s pre-pandemic school visit offer

We note here that while 16% of respondents said that their museum offer included digital activities pre-pandemic in question 2 above, only 40% stated that their school offer did not include digital activities pre-pandemic in question 4. This may have been because some types of digital activity, for example digital games or digital trails, may have been reported under the more generic ‘games’ and ‘trails’ categories in question 2. Or it may be because of varying perceptions of what constitutes a ‘digital activity’; for example, some may not see a downloadable lesson plan as distinctly ‘digital’. Nevertheless, in line with the 2020 survey, it appears that a considerable proportion of museums were already including digital activities in their school offer before the pandemic.

Section C. 'Your museum's school visit offer during the pandemic'

"5. In your opinion, has the pandemic impacted your museum's relationships with schools? If yes, in what ways?"

Forty-two (42) respondents answered this open-ended question, all of whom agreed that the pandemic did impact at least some aspects of their museum's relationships with schools.

Several respondents mentioned how the pandemic broke down their links with schools. This seems to have been an issue with schools who visited the museum occasionally, more than those schools who used the museum more regularly. For some the broken links were the result of museum closures and/or furloughed staff, which meant that the museum was unable to offer an alternative service to in-person visits. Respondents noted that these broken links mean lost income, not only now but also in the future.

The pandemic broke down museum links with schools who visited occasionally but strengthened relationships with regularly visiting schools

On the other hand, many respondents felt that the pandemic resulted in their museum strengthening relationships with its more regular school visitors. The responses indicate that this may have been the result of managing to deliver a service that was tailored to the needs of the schools, following consultations and piloting. These consultations were made possible by the cancellation of in-person visits during lockdowns, which freed staff time. The pandemic, it seems, gave museums the opportunity to stop and listen to the changing needs of their school audiences. Some museums had to focus on schools with whom they already had strategic long-term relationships, noting that these schools were more likely to continue visiting after lockdowns because they were already familiar with the museum site and less nervous about visiting in-person.

Museums responded to school needs during the pandemic with expanded and more flexible services

Several respondents noted how the pandemic forced museums to expand their school offer with more flexible services in response to schools' changing needs. Often this expansion involved the introduction or growth of digital activities, including virtual workshops, digital resources, online collaboration tools, email and videoconferencing, as well as loan boxes and other outreach

activities. Several participants also noted how the introduction of virtual visits and other digital activities enabled them to expand their geographic reach and engage schools that would not have otherwise visited.

Some respondents noted the opportunity to connect with families and pupils at home, pointing to an opportunity to consider potential links between schools and families programming.

Finally, respondents mentioned how the pandemic increased the visibility of schools and of their importance across museum departments, acknowledging schools as a core audience and source of income.

“6. Which of the following has your museum been doing during the pandemic?”

This multiple-select question was answered by 43 respondents. The options included in this question emerged from the analysis of an open-ended question in the 2020 survey, which enquired about museum plans for schools provision after the first lockdowns of 2020.

During the pandemic, an overwhelming majority of museums have been delivering remote sessions for classes (84%) and providing digital learning resources for use in the classroom (80%). A sizeable majority have been providing resources to support families with home schooling (68%) and large minorities of museums offered virtual museum tours (48%), provided non-digital learning resources for use in the classroom (45%), and delivered in-person sessions for classes on school premises (32%). Smaller minorities of museums have been delivering online teacher CPD (27%) and curriculum advice for teachers or parents (27%), as well as outdoor sessions (11%). Of the six respondents (14%) who selected ‘Other’, two said that their museum did not do anything for schools during the pandemic, while the other four mentioned the delivery of packages of craft activity material for disadvantaged pupils at home, the production of educational/informative videos, the development of bespoke curriculum-linked material, and virtual delivery of regular events and competitions.

Most museums provided digital learning resources for schools and classrooms and remote sessions for schools during the pandemic.

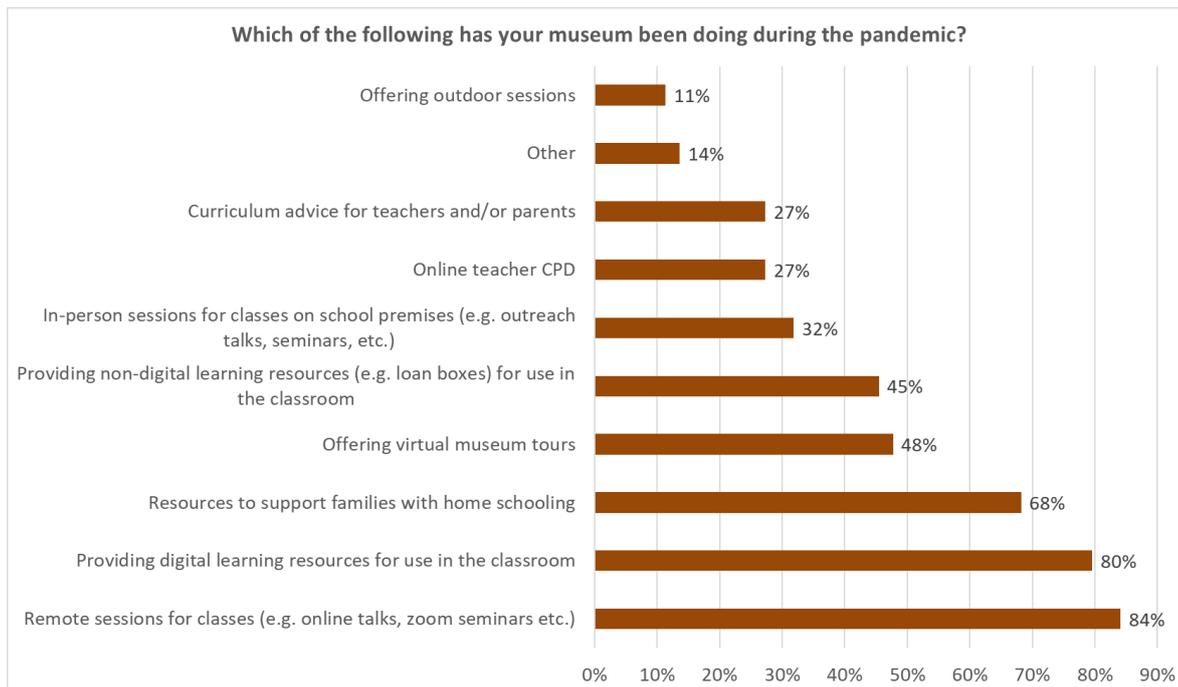


Figure 7. Museum activities during the pandemic

“7. In addition to the above, has your museum continued to host school visits during the pandemic, in person or remotely?”

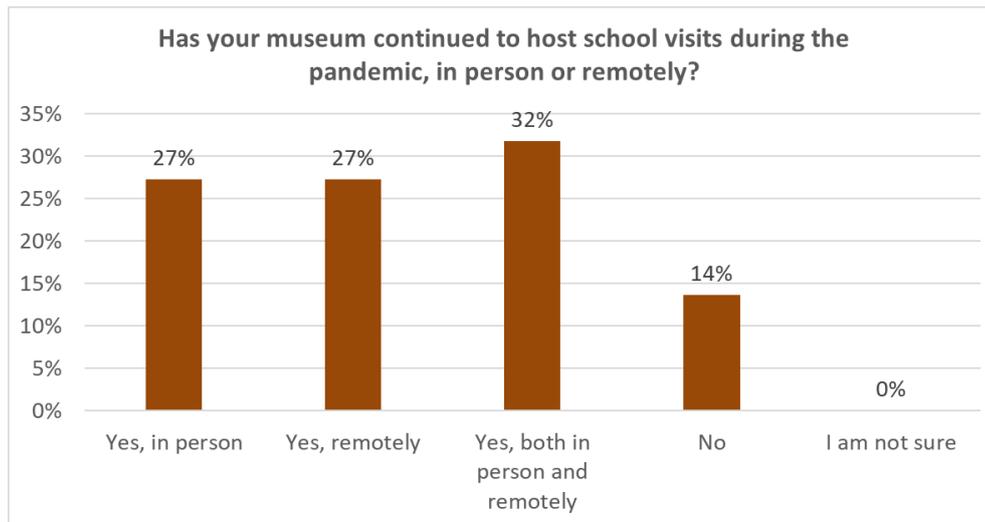


Figure 8. Types of school visits hosted by the museum during the pandemic

86% of museums continued to host school visits during the pandemic either in person, remote, or blended

There were 44 responses to this question, almost equally distributed across in person visits (27%), remote visits (27%), and both remote and in person visits (32%). A minority of respondents (14%) indicated that their museum did not host any school visits during the pandemic.

“7.a. Which of the following issues or challenges did your museum face in hosting school visits during the pandemic?”

This multi-select question was answered by 35 respondents. The options included in this question emerged from the analysis of an open-ended question in the 2020 questionnaire, which enquired about anticipated challenges in hosting school visits during and after the first lockdowns.

The most frequently selected challenges were ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and teachers (64%), imposing safe social distancing within museum spaces (52%), running sessions that require handling of objects and artifacts (52%), and ensuring adequate sanitisation of surfaces and objects (45%). More than a third of the respondents selected competing with other curriculum priorities following school closures (36%), low confidence or anxiety of teachers, students and parents related to covid safety (32%), and reduced staff capacity due to furlough or redundancy (32%). Approximately one fifth of respondents (18%) selected each of: uncertainty over social distancing rules and regulations, safe transport to the museum, and increased financial difficulties among school audiences. Issues related to capacity to support smaller student groups was selected only by one (2%) respondent. Of the three respondents who selected ‘Other’ (7%), two mentioned that their museum did not offer any school visits (and therefore had no challenges), and the third mentioned ‘digital poverty’, presumably among their school audiences.

The safety and wellbeing of staff, students and teachers, the safe implementation of social distancing, and handling object hygiene were the most common challenges in hosting school visits during the pandemic.

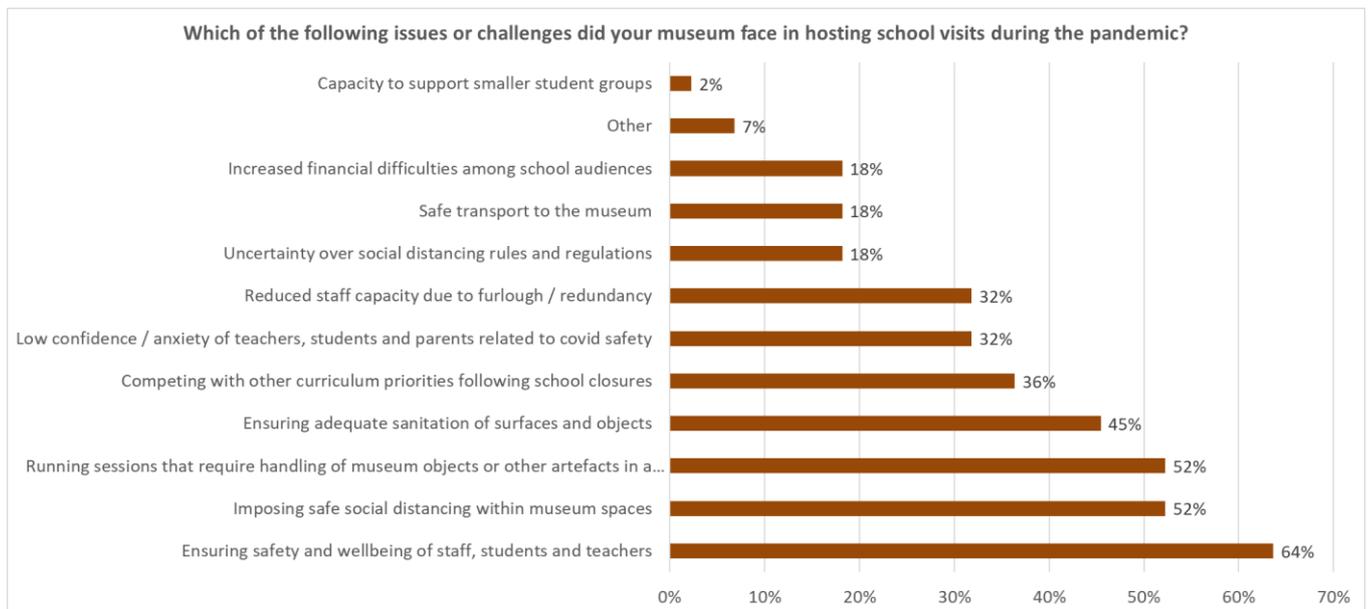


Figure 9. Issues or challenges faced by the museum in hosting school visits during the pandemic

“7.a.ii How did your museum address these challenges?”

Several museums gave exclusive access to schools and/or capped student numbers to ensure covid safety.

Thirty-four (34) respondents answered this question, of whom 76% referred to measures taken to covid-secure their sites and schools sessions. Giving school groups exclusive use of galleries (and in some cases of the whole museum) was frequently mentioned, alongside capping numbers of children per visit, quarantining handling objects and resources, prohibiting hands-

on interactions, implementing one-way traffic systems, reinforcing social distancing rules (e.g. with distance markers) and mask wearing, strictly timed entry and exit, availability of sanitation points, installing Perspex screens, and sanitising of spaces between visits. Activities that involved handling object replicas were replaced with viewing of the actual objects in the galleries or with viewing digital films of object closeups.

Covid risk assessments were also implemented (24%) and consultations with teachers were undertaken (9%). Nine respondents (26%) mentioned the use of online as the only or alternative/complementary method of delivery that aided them in facing the challenges. Three respondents mentioned the use of government and other educational guidelines related to covid-safe educational experiences.

Other measures taken to face challenges related to hosting school visits during the pandemic included: increased use of loan boxes; providing teachers with advice and resources regarding covid safety in the museum (including telephone consultations, website advice and FAQs); extensive and deep consultations with staff to align schools offer with staff capacity (time, physical and wellbeing capacity); limiting the museum’s schools offer and on one occasion cancelling school visits altogether; relying on the Government’s furlough scheme and / or redundancies to contain financial challenges; offering flexible online and outreach programmes; using funds to support school transport costs; and enabling unmediated, self-led school visits.

“7.b. Which of the following types of activity did your museum's school visit offer include during the pandemic? “

Thirty two (32) respondents answered this multiple-response question. The options included the same options as a similar question in the 2020 survey regarding other types of activity likely to be included in school visit offers post-lockdown; additional options were included which emerged from a thematic analysis of responses in the 2020 survey.

Most commonly included were educator-guided activities (52%) and workshops (45%). Over a third of respondents indicated digital activities (36%) and approximately a quarter indicated teacher-led activities (25%), hands-on activities (23%) and trails (23%). Under one-fifth of respondents indicated self-guided student activities (18%), gallery tours (18%), critical thinking activities (16%), multisensory activities (14%) and watching demonstrations or lectures (14%). Interactive activities that were popular before the covid pandemic were indicated by approximately 10 % or fewer respondents (costumed activities / re-enactments 11%, performance / role-play 9%, games 2%, playing with interactive exhibits 2%). This further exemplifies the difficulties in implementing covid-safe interactive experiences.

Hands-on, interactive activities were curtailed from school visits to the museum during the pandemic.

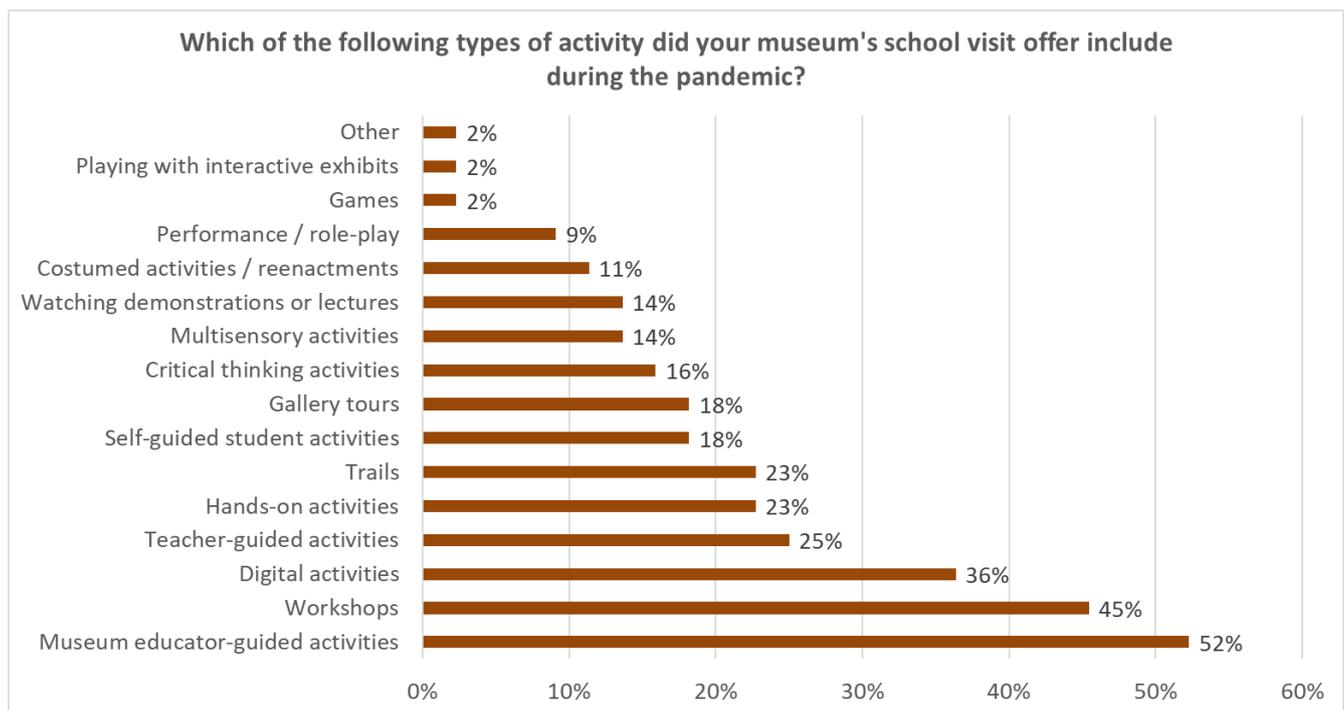


Figure 10. Types of activities included in the museum’s school visit offer during the pandemic

“7.c. Did your museum have to make any modifications to its school visit offer during the pandemic, other than to facilitate sanitation and social distancing on-site? If yes, what modifications were made?”

Thirty-two (32) respondents answered this question. Often-cited modifications included offering fewer activities (e.g. purging object handling, or costumes, or workshops) or modifying activities to suit social distancing and hygiene protocols (e.g. turning an object handling activity into a game that does not involve object handling). Cancellation of in person school visits was also mentioned, often replaced by

virtual activities or other types of schools offer such as remote teacher CPD and/or wellbeing sessions. Respondents also mentioned modifications that related to implementing social distancing, such as limiting visitor numbers on-site, admitting one class at a time, limiting time in the galleries, reserving certain days for school visits only, and offering non-facilitated, school-led visits to limit social contact. Modifications to ensure adequate ventilation were also mentioned, for example using different (better ventilated) rooms, or closing down galleries that were inadequately ventilated.

“8. How important do you think digital activities have been in your museum's school offer during the pandemic?”

Forty-four (44) respondents answered this question. A large majority (64%) indicated that digital activities have been extremely or very important in their museum’s offer during the pandemic. Just over one fifth (22%) indicated that digital activities have been moderately or slightly important, and the remaining 14% indicated that digital activities have not been important at all. It is worth noting that all those in the 14% had indicated that their museum either did not offer any museum visits during the pandemic or offered in person visits only.

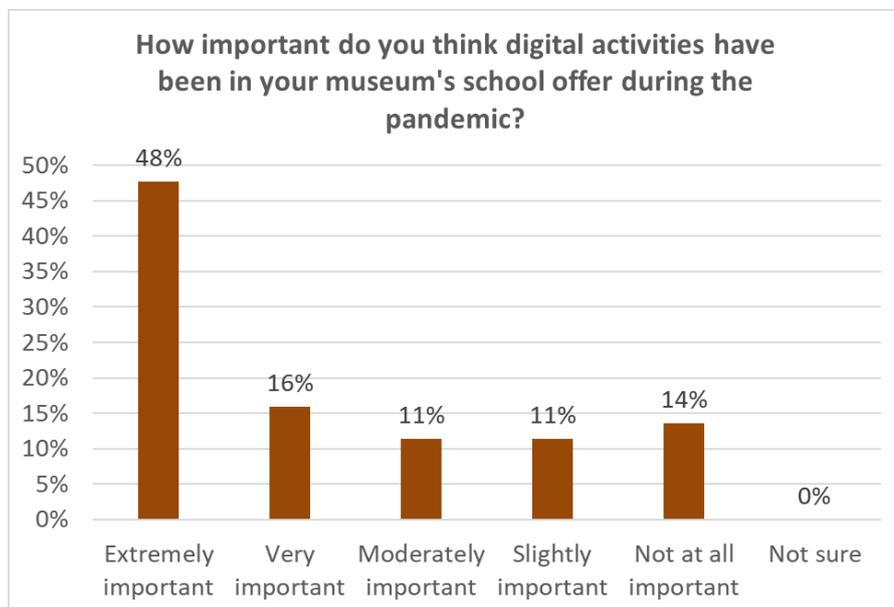


Figure 11. Importance of digital activities in the museum’s school offer during the pandemic

We looked at how the type of school visit provision (in person, remote, both, or none) during the pandemic correlated with how much importance respondents attributed to digital activities. As can be seen in the figure below, the majority of those who found digital activities to be very important or extremely important had also said that their museums offered remote or blended (remote and in-person) visits.

Digital activities have been very or extremely important for the majority of museums during the pandemic, particularly those offering blended or remote school visits.

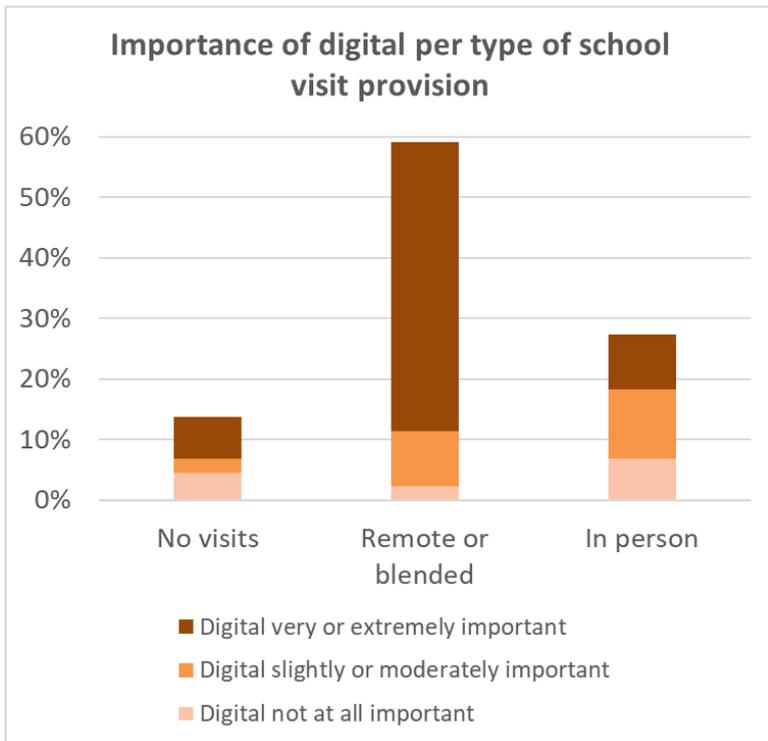


Figure 12. Importance of digital per type of school visit provision

“9. Which of the following have been used in digital activities of your museum's school visits during the pandemic?”

The majority of museums offered teacher resources, home activities and virtual tours during the pandemic.

Forty-three (43) respondents answered this question. A very large majority of respondents said that their museum’s digital activities included teacher resources (84%) and home activities (75%), and well over half of the museums used virtual tours (57%). A large minority of museums used social media (43%), online collections (41%) and live lectures (39%). A very small

proportion of museums used online games (14%), bitesize talks (5%) and educational apps (5%), while none used mobile apps. Only two participants (5%) said that their museum’s school offer did not include any of these elements. Other elements of digital activities offered included virtual workshops, videos with downloadable worksheets, short YouTube videos, and tablets with images of objects.

A comparison of use of different types of digital activities before, during and potentially after the pandemic is presented later in the report.

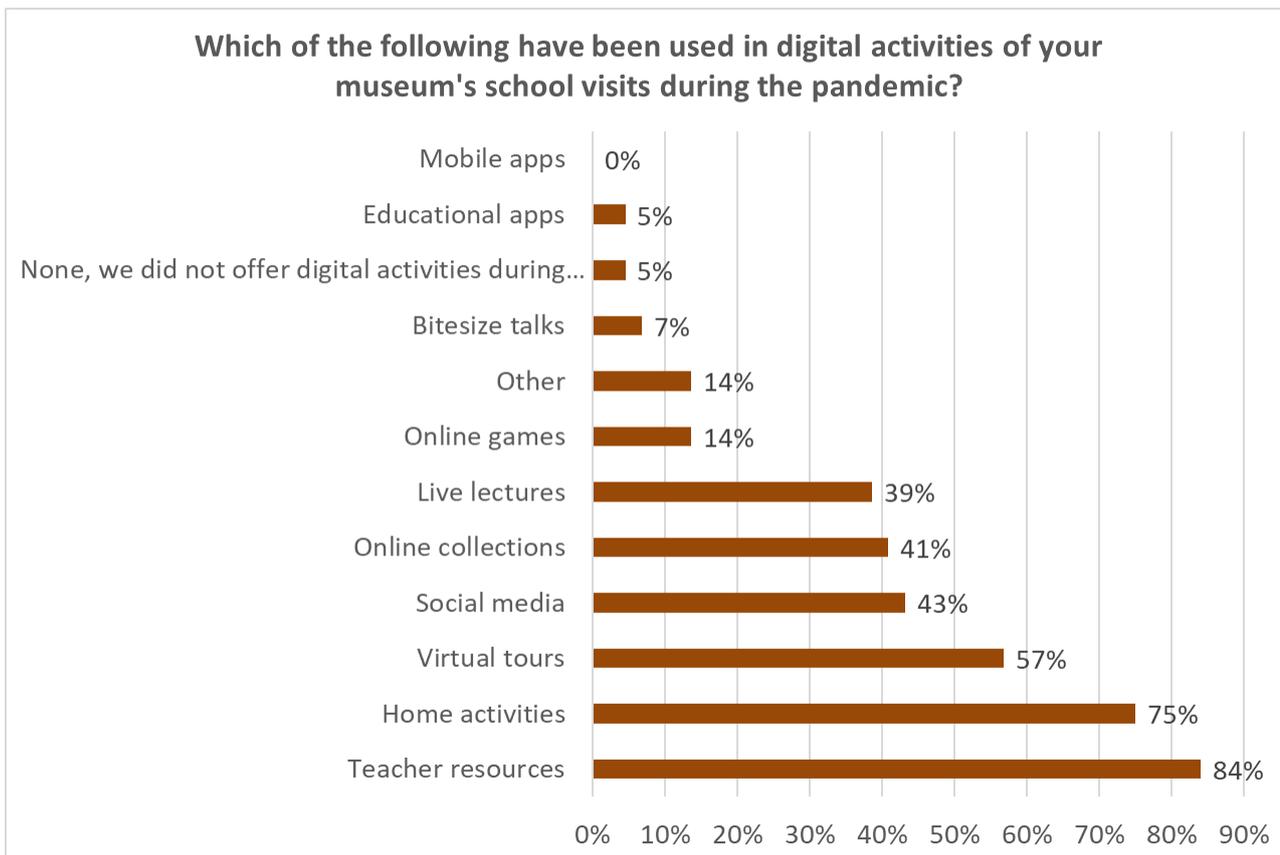


Figure 13. Which of the following have been used in digital activities of your museum's school visits during the pandemic?

“10. Which of the following were a concern for your museum in developing digital activities for school visits during the pandemic?”

Forty-one (41) respondents answered this question. A majority expressed concerns about how to maintain the benefits of learning outside the classroom (64%), staff digital capabilities (57%) and how to maintain the benefits of students' physical interactions with objects and artifacts (55%). Considerable percentages of respondents were also concerned about maintaining student interactions with museum experts (48%), as well as issues of staff capacity (43%) and the costs of digital development (36%). Concerns raised or highlighted under 'Other' included costs related to the production of digital content (e.g. artist recording fees), staff capacity limitations due to furlough and redundancies, school digital poverty leading to issues of access and inclusion, maintaining connections to curriculum standards, and maintaining the benefits of object-based learning.

Pedagogical concerns around maintaining the benefits of out-of-classroom learning were cited more often than concerns around costs or digital skills.

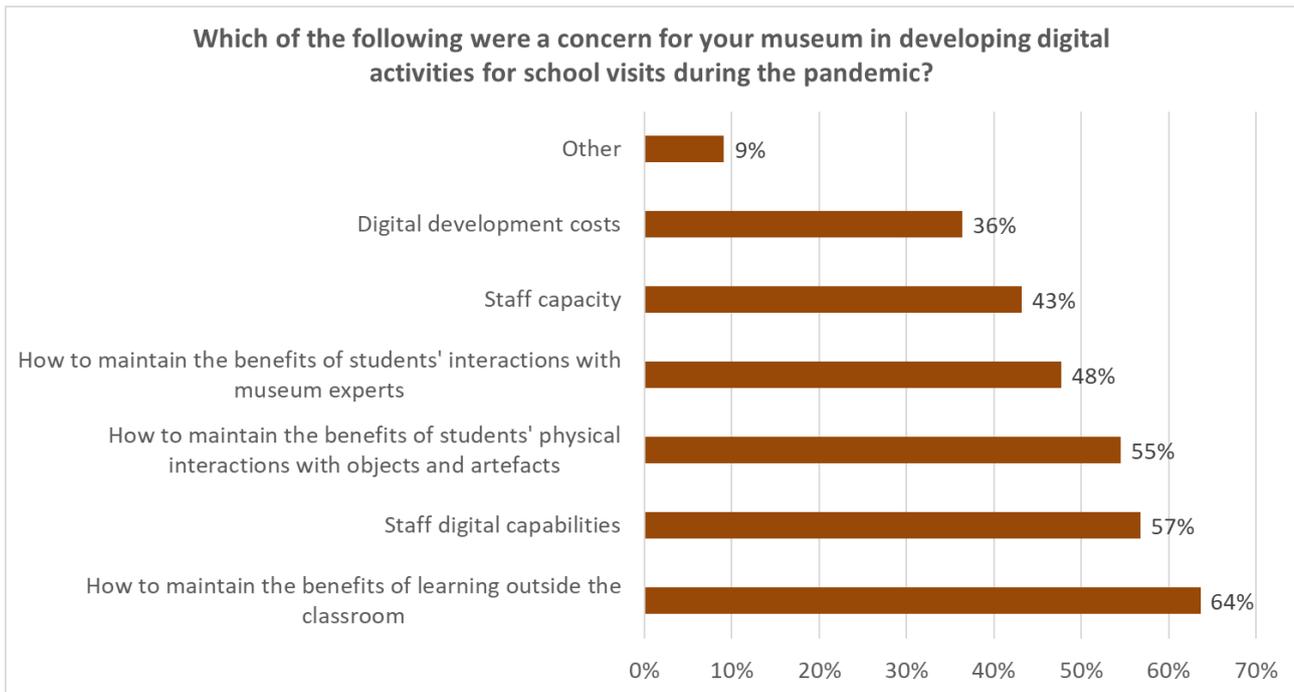


Figure 14. Concerns for the museum in developing digital activities for school visits during the pandemic

“11. In your opinion, what were the main advantages of integrating digital activities within your museum’s school offer during the pandemic?”

Thirty-eight (38) respondents answered this open-ended question.

The integration of digital activities helped museums to expand their geographic reach.

The respondents talked about advantages of the integration of digital activities for the museum. The ability to reach new audiences was mentioned often, both in terms of expanding the museum’s geographic reach and in terms of reaching those with physical access needs. One participant highlighted particular advantages for national museums that were able to reach wider geographic areas and thus be

truer to their ‘national’ scope. At the same time, museums were able to reach their existing audiences with a new/digital offer, and scale up educational programme attendance while keeping them interactive and participatory (e.g. through polls). Other participants framed this in terms of remodelling and updating long-running outreach programmes. Respondents also talked about how digital activities enabled museums to continue to provide a service during closures and lockdowns, and in this way to maintain their links with schools and to remain connected with their audiences and socially relevant at time that was difficult for teachers, students and parents. Respondents also highlighted how the pandemic brought urgency to already existing plans for offering digital access to schools and accelerated the development process, with one participant further noting how this also boosted interdepartmental collaborations. Finally, several respondents noted the potential future usefulness of the digital activities that were developed in this period, particularly in supporting

The pandemic brought urgency to existing plans for digital access for schools and accelerated development.

pre- and post-visit engagement with schools. Many museums acknowledged this potential early and embarked on the development of digital activities with plans for longer term use.

The respondents also highlighted the advantages for staff that resulted from integrating digital activities. The development of digital skills was mentioned, as well as the confidence to deliver schools sessions digitally. While this was a challenging task, many felt that the challenge was valuable in that it pushed museum staff to be innovative and to try out new ideas and pedagogies and to discover new things that work.

Museum education staff saw the need for digital skills development as a valuable challenge that pushed them to innovate pedagogies and methods.

Finally, the respondents identified advantages for students and teachers in school groups. Digital activities enabled students to continue to engage with the museum, and in some cases to get more out of their engagement (e.g. when removing craft activities

left more time for student discussion and Q&As). One respondent also mentioned that accessing objects digitally allows students to look closer than glass cases allow. Respondents also mentioned how teachers could receive help and support for their class teaching. One respondent remarked that the advantages of digital activities meant that many teachers were now keen to keep on using the new, blended learning format of school visits.

“12. In your opinion, what were the main disadvantages of integrating digital activities within your museum's school offer during the pandemic?”

Thirty-eight (38) respondents answered this open-ended question.

An often-cited disadvantage related to the loss of the physicality of the student experience. Students could not have direct contact with the real objects and the hands-on nature of school visits was compromised – though some museums compensated for this with loan boxes accompanying virtual sessions. There were also references to students missing out on outside-the-classroom experiences and the opportunity to see the museum spaces and to feel the atmosphere of the site, with one respondent suggesting that this leads to less inspiring experiences. Respondents noted that some activities were particularly difficult to adapt for online delivery, such as hands-on activities, role play, immersive experiences, and nature-based outdoor activities. Respondents also noted that interactions with students were impacted, with students being more reserved online than they would have been onsite. Respondents further noted how the nature of some types of digital activity limits the student experience; for example, when students engage asynchronously they miss the opportunity to ask questions, or when they engage in large numbers it is harder to have an interactive experience.

Respondents also talked about the learning curve that was involved in the production, promotion, and delivery of digital activities, as staff need to develop new digital skills and abilities. One such skill was digital safeguarding, particularly in the context of home schooling. The learning curve was made steeper by staff furloughing and redundancies which many respondents said affected capacity to produce and deliver. Other respondents remarked on the high volume of demand for digital activities and resources; presumably, this will have further accentuated capacity issues. One respondent said that capacity issues were resolved by training volunteers to deliver digital activities.

Technical issues noted by respondents included unreliable internet connections in museums, schools or student homes, incompatibility between museum/school/home technologies/systems, and limitations of technology to support some types of museum education activity.

Socio-technical issues were also identified by respondents as disadvantages of the integration of digital activities. Digital activities presume digital access; however, during home schooling in particular, this could not be guaranteed for local communities experiencing digital poverty. Other respondents raised the issue of staff and volunteers working from home during lockdowns and therefore having to prepare appropriate spaces in their private homes from where they could deliver school sessions. Respondents also

reported different approaches to considering the 'expiry date' of digital content and activities: some museums challenged themselves to design digital that could be usable beyond the pandemic, while others contemplated what was needed to get through the pandemic. One final socio-technical issue mentioned by respondents regarded the discoverability of their digital activities and responses within the "digital white noise" caused by the abundance of digital offers during the pandemic. Raising teacher awareness of their museum offer was difficult for some museums in a climate of increased digital output nationally. The production of high-quality digital content that could compete in this context may have been too big a challenge for some museums.

Finally, respondents mentioned the disadvantage of development costs and the lack of a charging model for digital activities and services, as well as the potential threat to future in-person visits posed by the success of remote/digital experiences.

Disadvantages of the integration of digital activities in school visits included socio-technical issues such as digital poverty, home working practicalities, and "digital white noise".

Section D. 'School visits after the pandemic'

"13. Do you expect school visits to your museum post-pandemic to differ from pre-pandemic visits? If yes, in what ways do you expect them to differ?"

Digital activities are likely to continue to be part of museums' post-pandemic schools offer.

Forty (40) respondents answered this open-ended question. Several respondents suggested that building on the know-how that museum teams developed during the pandemic, school visits to their museums post-pandemic are likely to include more digital activities. Secondary schools were identified as potential beneficiaries of this more digitalised offer, as digital activities are

easier to build into their tight timetables. In some museums, digital and remote activities could be used during times of the year when the museum site is less visitor friendly. Respondents also noted that teacher CPD can be supported by digital activities and resources, as can pre- and post-visit class sessions and pre-visit teacher preparation sessions.

Several respondents noted that they anticipate that covid safety will be phased out gradually if at all, and that precautions and behaviours that we all learned in the pandemic will continue. These include how handling objects and resources are sanitised and used, social distancing particularly in smaller sites, the need to host smaller groups, mask wearing, and risk assessments.

Some respondents said that they expect school visit numbers to remain lower than pre-pandemic, at least while schools are either still building the confidence to visit in person or/and while the schools' priority remains to catch up on 'key skills' within the classroom. School reluctance to visit is matched by what other respondents noted as shortcomings in the museums' schools offer due to staff changes that happened during the pandemic, particularly redundancies. These are expected to have a longer-term impact and lead to further changes in museums' schools offer post-pandemic.

School visit numbers will take a while to recover to pre-pandemic levels due to continuing pandemic concerns and pressure on schools to focus on 'key skills'

Yet, there were respondents who expect that their museums will come out of the pandemic with a refined and improved offer, having had the opportunity to look closer at and cater for some of their previously neglected school audiences (e.g. SEND, schools in deprived areas). A few respondents also noted the aspiration to continue engaging remote schools post-pandemic through their digital offer.

Finally, respondents mentioned productive changes in processes such as schools bookings, that occurred because of the pandemic and will continue post-pandemic.

"14. How important do you think digital activities will be in your museum's post-pandemic school offer?"

Forty-three (43) respondents answered this question. More than half (54%) anticipate digital activities to be extremely important or very important in their museum's post-pandemic school offer, while 42% anticipate them to be moderately or slightly important.

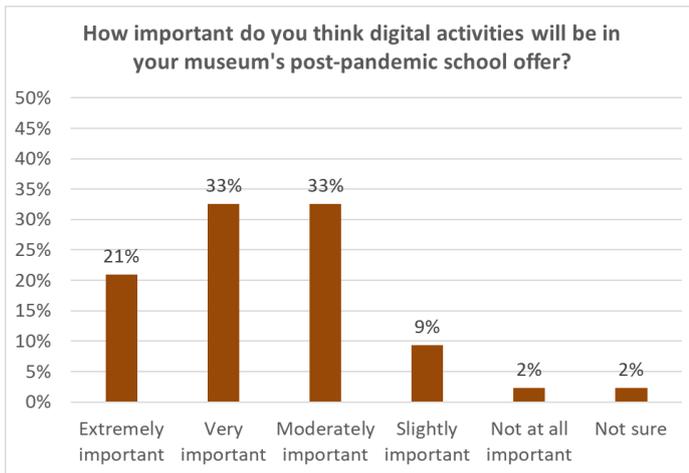


Figure 15. Importance of digital activities for the museum’s post-pandemic school offer

“15. Which of the following do you think are likely to be used in digital activities of your museum's post-pandemic school visits?”

Forty-three (43) respondents answered this multiple-select question.

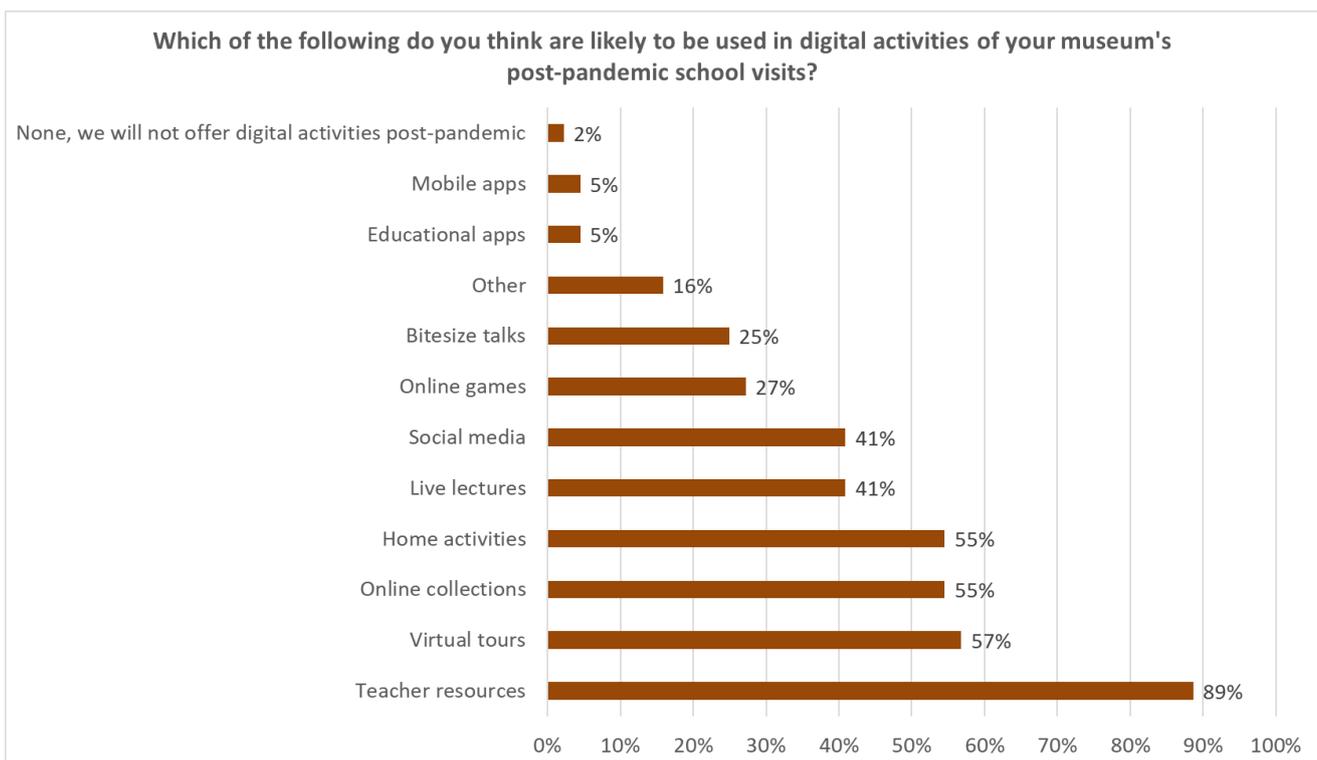


Figure 16. Which of the following do you think are likely to be used in digital activities of your museum’s post-pandemic school visits?

Teacher resources were selected by a great majority of respondents (89%). The majority also selected virtual tours, use of online collections and home activities (57%, 55% and 55% respectively). Sizeable minorities selected live lectures (41%) and social media (41%). One quarter or fewer respondents selected online games (27%), bitesize talks (25%), educational and mobile apps (2% each). Only 2% of respondents said that their museum will not offer digital activities post-pandemic. Elements of digital

activities mentioned under ‘Other’ included virtual/online and pre-filmed workshops, podcasts, and teacher CPD.

“16. Which would be the main reasons for your museum post-pandemic to offer blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities?”

Forty-two (42) respondents answered this multiple-select question. The options included in this question emerged from analysis of an open-ended question in the 2020 survey which asked for opinions about the prospect of blended school visits. The analysis found benefits and challenges of blended school visit experiences, which informed the options in this and in the following question in the 2021 survey.

A very large majority of respondents indicated as main reasons the ability to support remote student engagement before and after the visit (84%) and to expand school outreach work beyond the museum's geographic reach (80%). Other reasons selected by a significant minority of respondents were to increase teacher support (45%), to support students with special educational needs and disabilities (43%), to augment school outreach work with virtual museum experiences (41%), to reduce environmental and financial costs of in-person visits (36%), to make school visits more interactive (34%), to support home schooling (34%), to provide more specific support on curriculum topics (32%), and to scaffold student understanding (30%). A very small minority selected to support small groupwork (7%) and an even smaller minority (5%) found no good reasons for offering blended school visits. Reasons provided under ‘Other’ (by 7% of respondents) included to encourage ongoing connection with schools both locally and in the wider area, to engage with schools with less impact on reduced staffing, and to maintain a high-quality offer with covid restrictions in place.

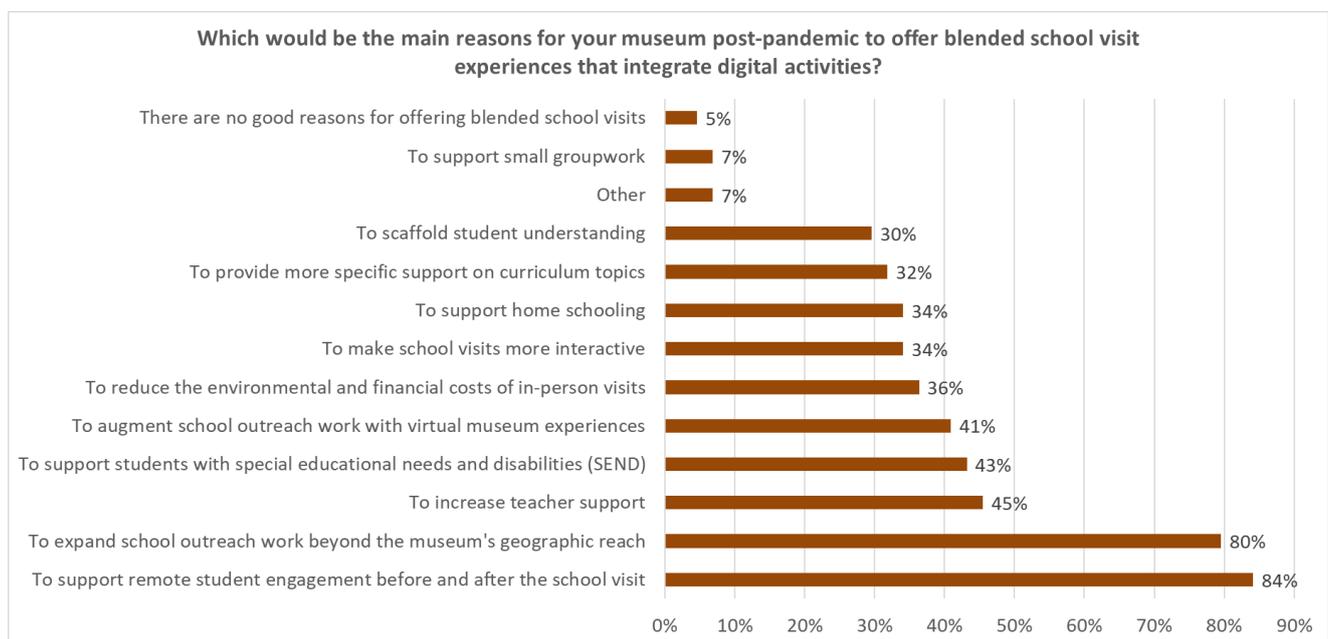


Figure 17. Main reasons for the museum to offer blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities (post-pandemic)

“17. Which of the following would be a challenge if your museum were to offer blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities post-pandemic? “

Forty-four (44) respondents answered this multi-select question. The most commonly selected challenge in offering blended school visits was staff capacity (80%). More than half of the respondents also indicated challenges with the digital infrastructure of schools (59%) and the costs involved in digital development (52%). Large minorities of respondents also indicated challenges around staff digital capabilities (45%) and teacher digital capabilities (32%). Challenges identified under ‘Other’ included limited onsite space, issues of student safeguarding on different platforms, and the museum’s IT infrastructure.

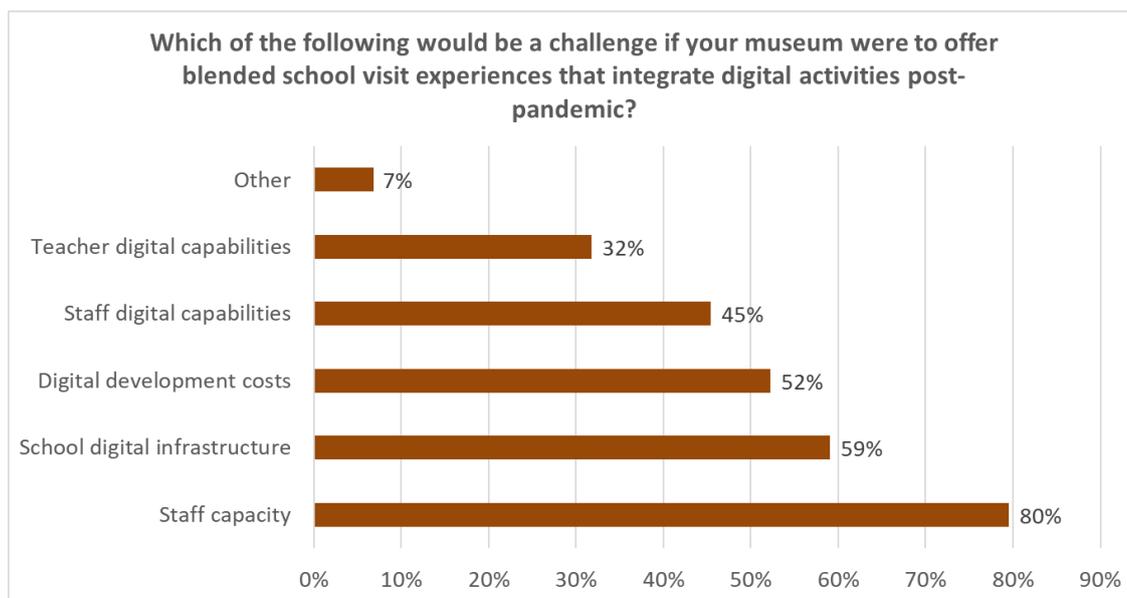


Figure 18. Challenges if the museum were to offer blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities post-pandemic

“18. In your opinion, is there a future for blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities in the longer term, post-pandemic?”

Thirty-seven (37) respondents answered this open-ended question. The responses can be categorised as affirmative (84%), negative (5%), or ambivalent (11%). The percentages of affirmative, negative and ambivalent responses are very similar to those from the 2020 survey for the same question (83%, 5% and 12% respectively), indicating that one year of greater digital engagement with schools has not dampened down the prospects of blended school experiences becoming a permanent feature of the museum offer.

The potential financial gains of delivering blended school visits needs need to be balanced with the costs.

In the 2020 survey, respondents had talked about the benefits as well as the challenges and drawbacks of blending digital with in-person school activities. Benefits and challenges were covered explicitly in separate questions in the 2021 survey (see above), therefore 2021 responses did not cover benefits and challenges as extensively. Nevertheless, respondents did reiterate various practical benefits of blended visits in their responses to this question. They noted that digital activities are cheaper to run, easier to administer and can generate income for the museum. On the other hand, respondents noted that the development

of digital content does require higher budgets, as does the need for robust museum IT infrastructure and facilities and the increased demands on staff capacity. Others noted how blended or remote visits can be cheaper for schools, as they remove some travel costs. Taken together, the points raised here indicate a need to balance financial gains with financial costs, for museums as well as schools.

The 2021 survey responses also highlighted that benefits may be audience-dependent. Respondents identified particular benefits for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), in terms of pre-visit engagement. Benefits for teachers were also identified, noting that digital content and communication enable museums to better support teachers. Secondary schools were also thought to potentially benefit, as blended visits could be easier to fit into their busy class schedules. Respondents also noted the potential of a blended approach to cater for different learning styles better than a single mode approach, as well as its potential to extend engagement with experts in the field and to cultivate students' 21st century skills. Respondents also mentioned that whether a visit is blended or in-person only or remote-only would be a school choice, highlighting that blended visits are unlikely to be 'one size fits all'. They identified the need, on one hand, for co-designing blended visits with schools and on the other hand, the need for evaluation, remarking that it is too soon to tell how well blended visits work as there is currently a lack of hard evidence for their effectiveness. It is worth noting, however, that several respondents reported an emerging demand for digital activities by schools (e.g. for digital live workshops), which have remained popular with schools even after lockdowns.

Several participants noted the potential for blended visits to reach schools outside the museum's ordinary geographic reach, particularly for schools that cannot afford long trips. This can be transformational, particularly for small local museums as it "allows a wider audience to see what we do".

Blended visits can prolong class engagement with the museum and enrich in-person visits with additional content and activities.

Several respondents in the 2021 survey reiterated the potential of digital to extend class engagement to before and after the in-person class visit, which has also been identified in the 2020 survey. Citing museum education research that shows benefits of such extended contact, e.g. in terms of improving memorability of the experience and

the cultivation of transferable skills, respondents argued that having the option to do this digitally maximises the chances that schools and teachers will take advantage of such extended contact. They also identified additional benefits of such pre-visit engagement for SEND students, for whom orientation to the site and preparation for the in-person visit can be particularly beneficial. It is worth noting that some of the respondents who made positive remarks about the potential of digital to expand pre- and post-visit engagement, were also among those most passionately arguing for the irreplaceable benefits of in-person visits. Some respondents argued that this is also what teachers want to use digital for: to extend rather than replace the in-person visit.

Nevertheless, respondents also identified the potential of digital content (mentioning filmed workshops, additional activities and videos) to enrich the in-person visit and, in doing so, to further scaffold meaning making and understanding. Such additions, it was argued, would also lead to an increased and diversified offer that leads to more creative and dynamic engagement. Again, respondents stressed that this should not be a replacement for in-person visits.

Several respondents noted the increased confidence of schools and teachers with digital as well as the increased digital confidence and skills of museum staff and the momentum in digital development that the lockdowns created. The responses suggest that these circumstances offer museums an opportunity to innovate the school visit as a blended experience. And vice versa, a shift towards blended visits now can keep the momentum of the digitalisation of the museum experience that begun in earnest with the lockdowns, helping museums to remain relevant in an increasingly digital/ised society. One respondent explained that blended visits was already established practice at their museum before the pandemic, suggesting that the pandemic was the catalyst rather than the cause of their emergence.

The pandemic has created the conditions for museums to innovate the school visit as a blended experience.

Discussion

The findings presented above are based on data from education, learning, outreach and related museum professionals at various levels of seniority, the vast majority of whom (98%) are directly involved in the planning and/or delivery of school visits and/or other public engagement activities, and all of whom continued to work during the lockdown, either from home (32%) or on-site (39%) or splitting their time between home working and on-site working (30%).

Respondents agreed overwhelmingly (93%) that school visits are extremely or very important to their museum, not only because they are an important source of income but also because of the opportunities they offer to engage with local communities, to develop new audiences and to connect students with their local heritage. The pandemic impacted the balance in these relationships, keeping schools away from museums through closures first, and then safety concerns, as well as restricting museums' ability to cater for their school audiences because of staff and resource shortages. Links seem to have been severed, particularly with those schools that museums did not have secure relationships.

In this context, many museums searched for a different balance in accommodating the needs of schools, with some opting to dedicate part of their opening hours exclusively to schools, and others having to reduce the number of school visits and prioritise paying schools because of museum staff shortages. These approaches seem to have worked, as respondents noted strengthened relationships with their long-term, regular school visitors. Ironically, the disruptions to the schools service that were caused by the pandemic may have led to improvements of this service.

Museums responded to the pandemic with updated offers to match the needs of schools, including offering remote live sessions and virtual tours, providing digital resources for use in the classroom and/or to support families with home schooling, scaling up their school outreach with more staff visits and more loan boxes sent to classrooms, and supporting teachers and parents through online CPD and curriculum advice. Combined with social distancing and hygiene measures on-site, these enabled most museums (86% of respondents) to continue to offer at least some form of school visit – in person, remote or blended.

In compiling and implementing their pandemic response education teams had to overcome challenges, including around the safety and wellbeing of all involved, around the practical implementation of covid safety guidance, around digital poverty in local communities, and around the capacity of staff and of the museum infrastructure. To address these challenges, museums first and foremost implemented standard hygiene measures (ventilation, sanitation stations, etc.). In addition, education teams reformed the logistics of school visits (e.g. arranging exclusive use of galleries by school groups, limiting school visit duration, or offering non-facilitated visits only); they either found covid-safe alternatives for hands-on activities (e.g. handling replicas replaced with viewing digital closeups of objects or with game activities), found remote/online alternatives for in-person activities (e.g. loan boxes or digital workshops replaced in-person workshops), or eliminated certain activities altogether (e.g. costumed activities).

Implementation of these changes was informed by combinations of the consultations with schools mentioned above, consultations with museum staff, and government and other educational covid-safety guidelines. However, education teams also took into consideration requirements related to pedagogy (maintain benefits of out-of-classroom learning and benefits of interactions with objects and experts) and practical implementation (staff capabilities and capacity, digital development costs and school digital poverty).

The response of museum education and schools teams to the pandemic drove up the development and use of digital activities in school visits. It is interesting to look at how the use of digital and perceptions about its importance vary through pre-, during and post-pandemic periods. To establish the context of change, let us first look at variations in the kinds of activities offered to visiting schools before and during the pandemic. Figure 19 below shows percentages of museums that used each kind of activity in their school offer before and during the pandemic. The graph makes clear that museum school offers during the pandemic were curtailed significantly, with many types of activity that were routinely offered pre-pandemic being significantly limited during the pandemic. Figure 20 shows the percentage change for each of these activities and makes clear that the most significantly affected were hands-on, interactive activities that require physical manipulation of objects and artifacts or close interaction with other people. By contrast, more passive activities like watching lectures and demonstrations were less affected.

Digital activities were a notable exception, the use of which increased significantly during the pandemic compared with pre-pandemic use.

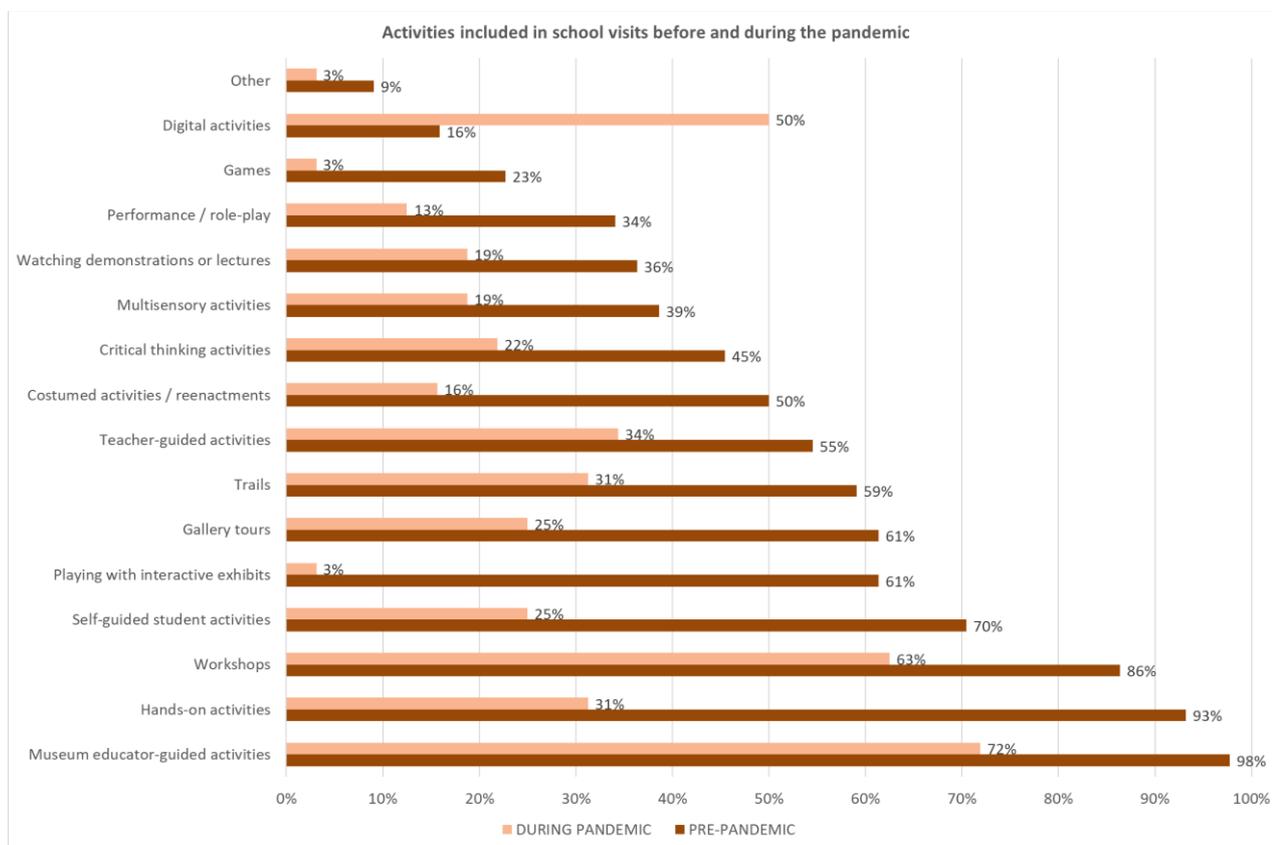


Figure 19. Activities included in school visits before and during the pandemic

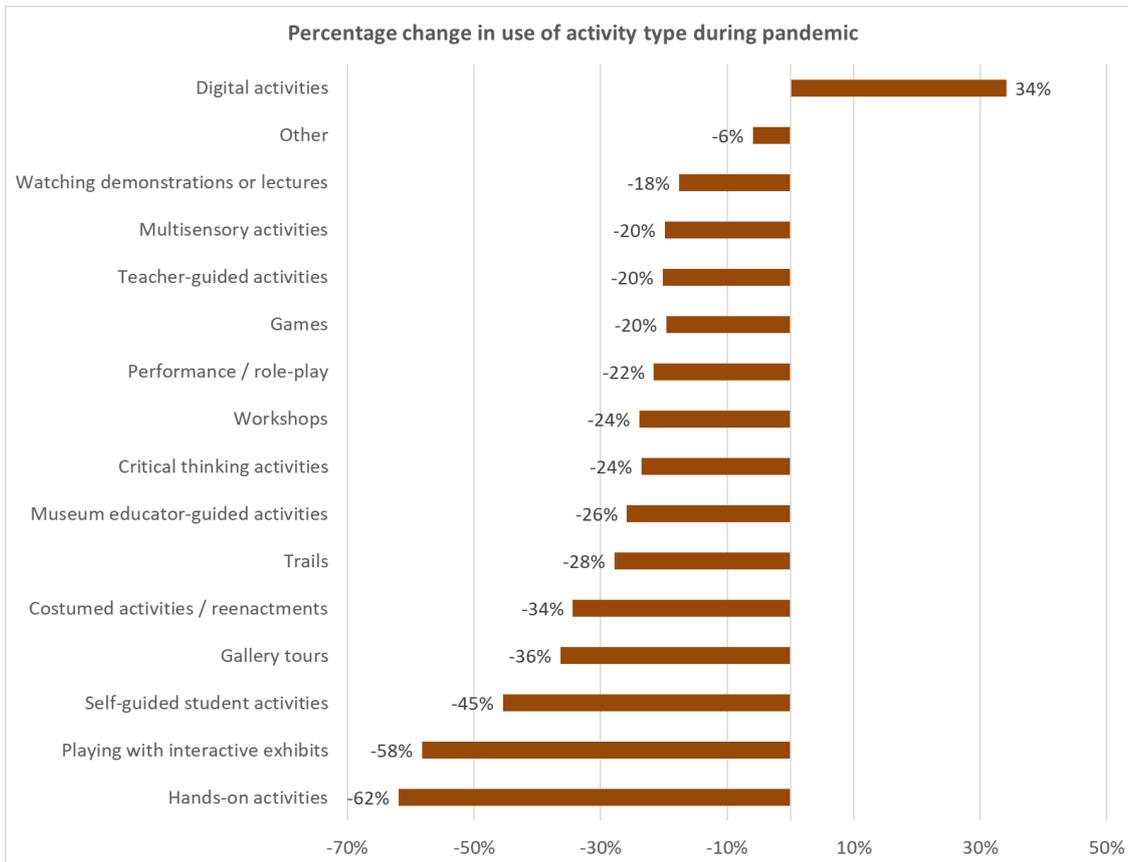


Figure 20. Percentage change in use of activity type during pandemic

Shifts in perceptions of the importance of digital activities in the museum’s school offer across different periods of the pandemic reflect their increased use during the pandemic. Thus, if we look at how important respondents said digital activities were pre-, during and post-pandemic (Figure 21), we can see a shift from primarily ‘not at all important’ before the pandemic to ‘extremely important’ during the pandemic. This is followed by a more balanced spread across the importance scale after the pandemic, when digital activities are expected to largely remain ‘very’ or ‘moderately important’.

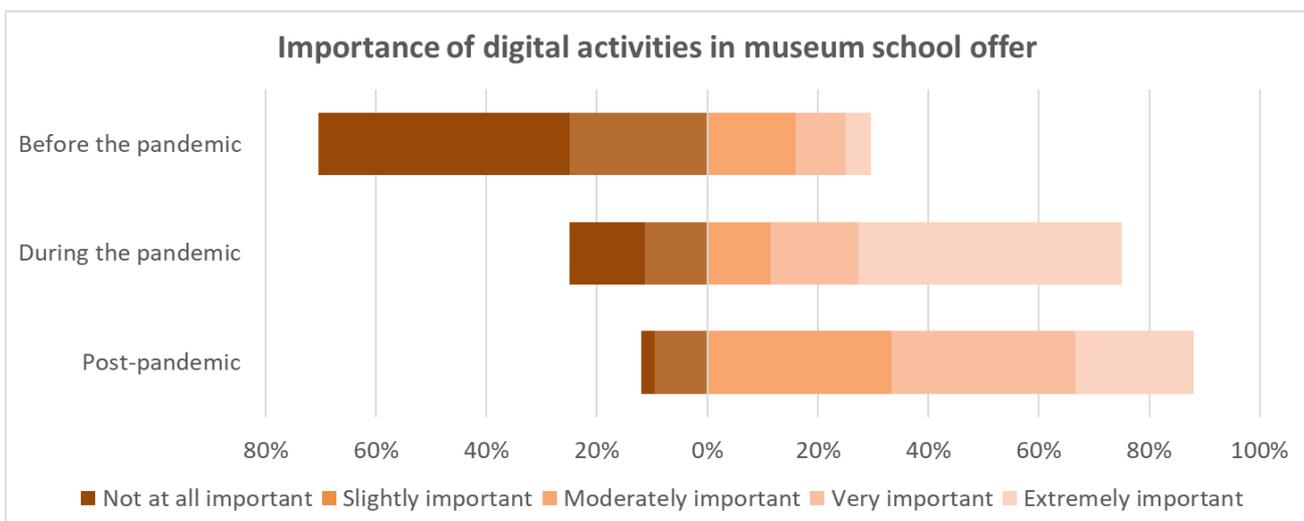


Figure 21. Importance of digital activities in museum school offer

The 2020 survey included a similar question about the importance of digital activities after the first lockdown, albeit using a slightly different importance scale: “Very important”, “Important”, “Moderately important”, “Slightly important”, and “Not important at all”, without a “Not sure” option. As discussed in the introduction, the period that the 2020 survey referenced as ‘post-lockdown’ overlaps with the period referenced in the 2021 survey as ‘during the pandemic’. In the figure below we have mapped the five importance levels of the 2020 ‘post-lockdown’ survey question onto the first five importance levels of the 2021 ‘during the pandemic’ survey question, to attempt a comparison. The 2021 “Extremely important” option is mapped onto the 2020 “Very important” option, as these were the highest importance options in the two surveys; and so on. It appears that digital activities have been, essentially, as important during the pandemic as respondents anticipated during the first lockdown.

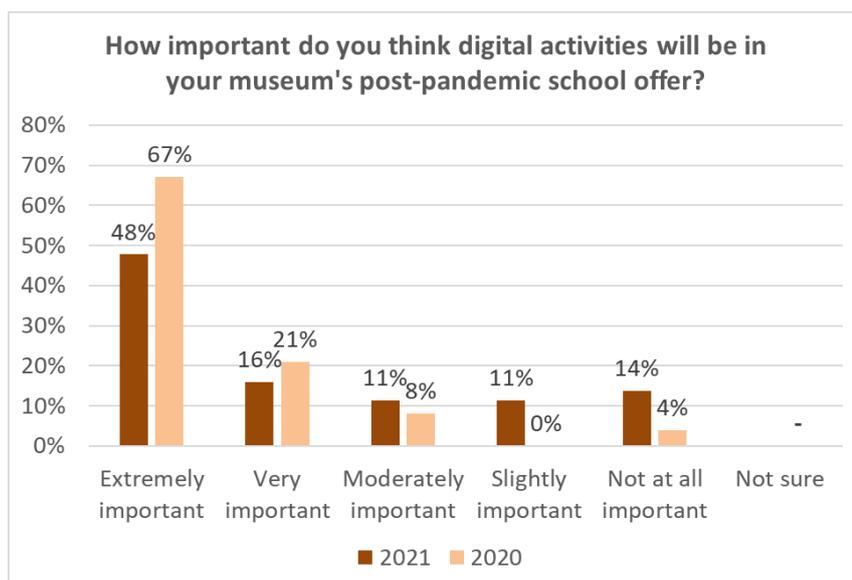


Figure 22. Importance of digital activities in the museum’s post-pandemic school offer

While the use of digital activities rose overall during and is expected to continue to be higher after the pandemic, this rise was not uniform across all types of digital activities. Figure 23 presents a comparison between percentages of museums offering different types of digital activities before, during and after the pandemic. As can be seen in the graph, the pandemic has made almost no difference to the use of mobile and educational apps, which were and remained among the least used elements of the digital offer for schools. It also made little difference to the use of social media, which was already established and was only modestly boosted by the pandemic. Teacher resources, home activities and virtual tours seem to have gone mainstream during the pandemic and many museums aim to keep these after the pandemic too, although the intention to keep home activities post-pandemic drops by a considerable 20% in relation to their use during the pandemic. Online collections, live lectures, online games and bitesize talks, also saw considerable rises. Bitesize talks, online games and online collections present particularly interesting cases, as it appears that many more museums aspire to include these in their post-pandemic offer than those that included them during the pandemic. The percentages for ‘Other’ also increased during and after the pandemic compared to before, suggesting that museums are considering an even larger variety of digital activities for their school visits. Importantly, the 36% of museums that did not use any of these in their school visit offer dropped to 5% during the pandemic and is set to drop further to 2% post-pandemic; digital activities in school visits are here to stay.

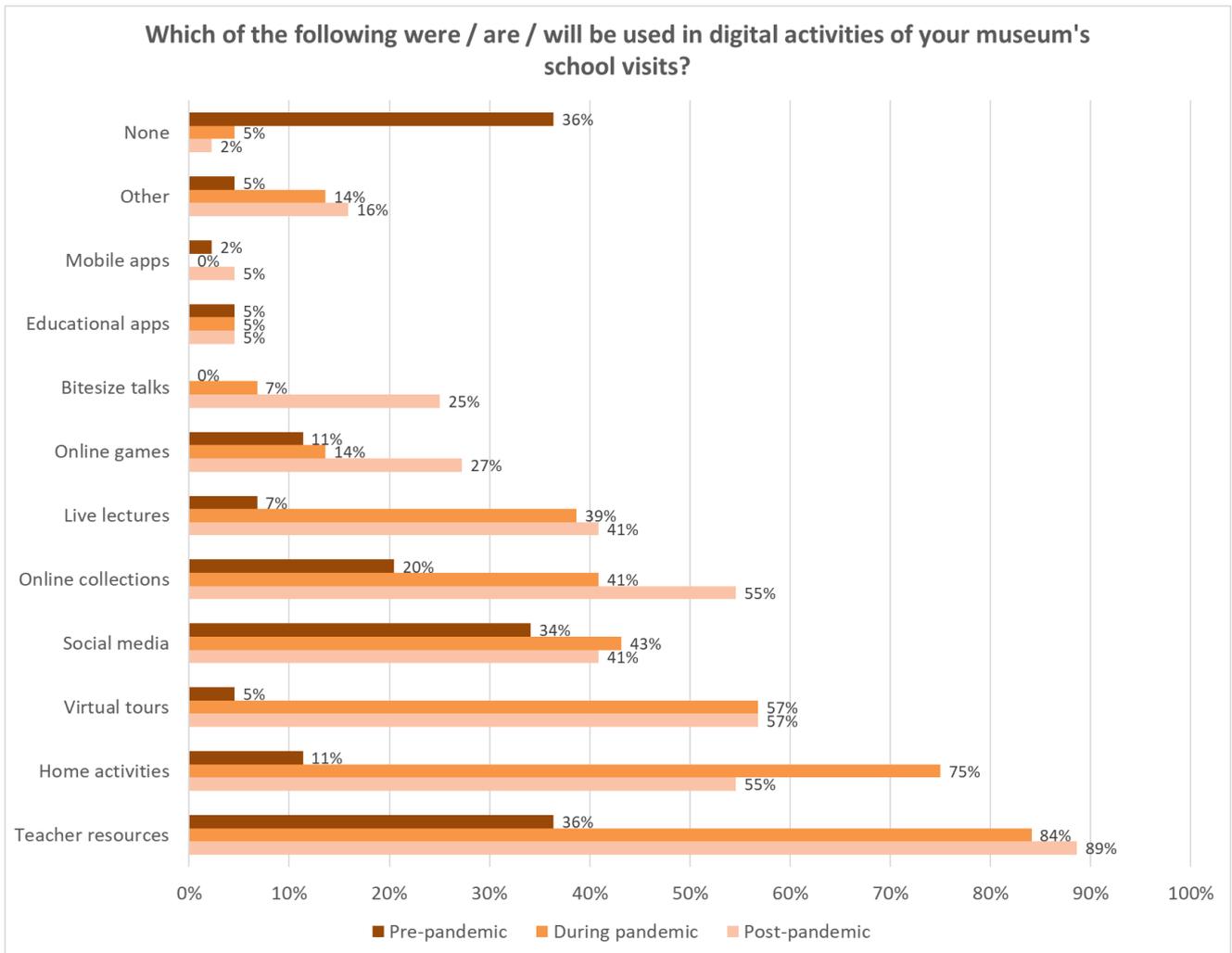


Figure 23. Which of the following were/are/will be used in digital activities of your museum’s school visits?

To gauge how intensified the digitalisation of the school visit is, let us also look at the number of digital elements that respondents selected in these questions. The maximum number selected across the three questions (pre-, during and post-pandemic) was eight, and the minimum number was zero (participants who selected ‘None’). The figure below shows the percentage of participants that selected the number of elements shown on the x axis. While half of the participants (50%) indicated that their museum used at most one element pre-pandemic, more than half indicated that their museum used four or more elements during the pandemic (59%) and would continue to do so post-pandemic (55%). These results corroborate findings from the 2020 survey, which indicated a median increase of +3 in the number of digital elements that museums were planning to use post-lockdown compared with pre-pandemic use. Clearly, following the digital boom in museum engagement that came with the pandemic, museums are also expanding the repertoire of digital elements that are included in their school offer.

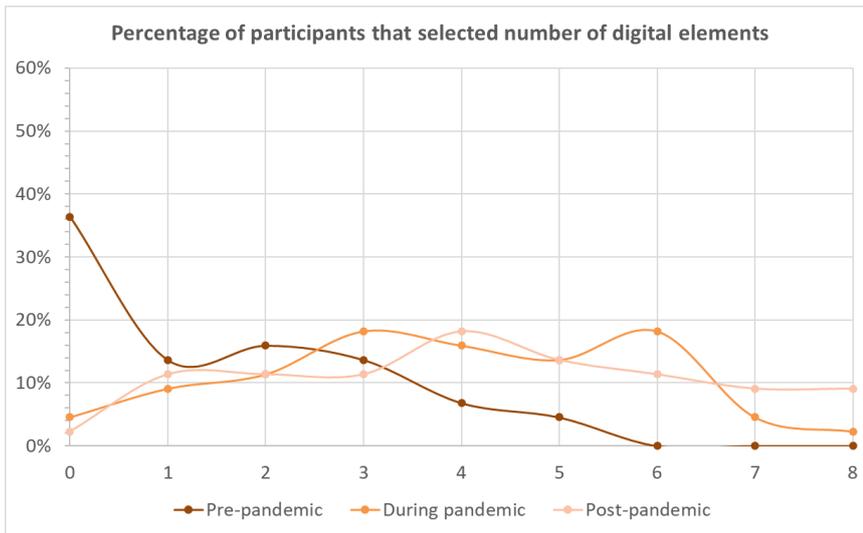


Figure 24. Percentage of participants that selected number of digital elements

The survey data evidence that the now infamous ‘pivot to digital’ also took place in museums’ delivery of service to school groups during the pandemic, and has momentum to stay in place beyond. The pivot was not without challenges of its own, including the loss of the physicality of the student experience, the educational and well-being benefits of which are well established; student and museum staff proficiency in sustaining dialogue online/asynchronously; accentuated issues of staff digital capability and capacity that had to be overcome in a very short time; and technical, socio-technical (like digital poverty, practicalities of home working etc.) and finance problems that had to be solved. These challenges were balanced out by advantages, including the ability to expand the geographic reach as well as the accessibility of schools programmes, the ability to respond promptly to an emerging societal need, the professional development of museum staff, and the opportunity to innovate a well-established service technically and pedagogically.

Looking to the future, survey respondents could clearly see blended museum experiences for schools under various scenarios: for secondary schools who do not have the time to visit in person, for SEND student groups who value pre-visit orientation to the site, for teachers who benefit from pre-visit support, for all students who benefit

We need to generate hard evidence of the effectiveness of blended school visits.

from an elongated dialogue with the museum that stretches out before and after the class visit and also from enriched content during their visit. To make this vision reality, museums will on one hand have to balance financial gains and costs, and on the other hand to undertake systematic evaluations and to generate hard evidence to prove the effectiveness of blended visits.

Conclusion

The responses to this survey make it abundantly clear that museum education and schools teams responded to the pandemic with consideration for the needs of their school audiences and their local school communities. Meeting the educational and wellbeing needs of teachers, students and their families remained their top priority, and inspired them to develop new (digital) capabilities and to troubleshoot as needed along the way. Our findings suggest an appetite to retain the gains from these efforts post-pandemic, with a more permanent reinvention of the school visit to the museum as a blended experience that combines in-person and remote, physical and digital activities. Central to the future success of such blended experiences will be the collection of hard evidence of their pedagogical effectiveness and of their integration into museum and school systems and processes.

Appendix A: Survey questions

School visits post-lockdown: Follow on survey

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Page 1: Welcome

Introduction

We are researchers based at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. Last year, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption that the lockdowns created for schools and museums, we surveyed museum education and related professionals on their adjustments and new approaches to school visits to museums. The findings of that survey were reported in the [School visits post-lockdown: the role of digital](#).

A year on, the impacts of museum closures on how school groups engage with museums are clearer. This survey explores the ways in which museums adjusted and/or reinvented their schools provision during this time, and what role digital played in this.

About your participation

This survey is for museum educators and other museum professionals who are involved in the planning and/or delivery of school visits. It focuses on understanding the disruptions, challenges and changes in school visits during covid19.

The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will NOT be asked for any personal details (such as your name or the name of your museum). If you wish to receive information about the next stage of this project you will be asked to disclose your email address so that we can contact you. We will not use your email address for any other purposes, now or in the future.

Your responses will be used to inform the planning of future research in this area and will be reported anonymously in academic papers.

Protecting your confidentiality

Any information that you provide will be anonymous and will be treated as confidential. Data collection and processing will comply with the General Data Protection Requirements (GDPR). Questionnaire data will be encrypted and kept securely on University of Leicester file systems for five years after the publication of findings, then will be permanently deleted.

If you have any questions about the ethical conduct of this research, please contact the Leicester Museum Studies Research Ethics Officer, Dr Dave Unwin (dmu1@le.ac.uk).

How to contact us:

If you would like any further information before taking part, please contact:

Dr Giasemi Vavoula, Associate Professor in Museum Studies, University of Leicester
(email: g.vavoula@le.ac.uk).

Dr Stamatina Anastopoulou, EU Marie Sklodowska-Curie Research Fellow, University of Leicester
(email: stamatina.anastopoulou@le.ac.uk)

Gemma Cantlow, ESRC DTP PhD candidate, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester (email: gc250@leicester.ac.uk)

School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RA, UK

By pressing the *Next* button you agree that you have read and understood the information above and you agree that your anonymised contributions will be used for the stated purposes.

Page 2: Your museum's school visit offer: general context

In this section you are asked questions about your museum's school visit offer in general.

Note: Think of "*your museum*" as the museum that you worked with/for most recently.

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, [view as separate questions instead?](#)

In your opinion, how important are school visits to your museum?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important	Not sure
Importance of school visits	<input type="checkbox"/>					

In your opinion, for which of the following reasons are school visits important to your museum? Tick all that apply:

- School visits are at the core of the museum mission
- School visits are an important source of income
- School visits help to increase visitor numbers
- School visits are a means for developing new audiences
- School visits enable us to engage with local communities
- School visits enable us to link education with local heritage and history
- Other

In your opinion, has the importance of school visits changed for your museum as a result of the pandemic? Please explain.

Page 3: Your museum's school visit offer pre-pandemic

In this section you are asked questions about your museum's school visit offer before the covid19 pandemic.

Note: Think of "*your museum*" as the museum that you worked with/for most recently.

Which of the following types of activity were included in your museum's pre-pandemic school visit offer (tick all that apply):

- Self-guided student activities
- Teacher-guided activities
- Museum educator-guided activities
- Trails
- Critical thinking activities
- Hands-on activities
- Watching demonstrations or lectures
- Playing with interactive exhibits
- Gallery tours
- Games
- Digital activities
- Workshops
- Costumed activities / reenactments
- Performance / role-play
- Multisensory activities
- Other

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, [view as separate questions instead?](#)

How important do you think digital activities were in your museum's school offer before the pandemic?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important	Not sure
Digital activities	<input type="checkbox"/>					

If your museum's pre-pandemic school visit offer included digital activities, which of the following were used? Tick all that apply.

- None, we did not offer digital activities pre-pandemic
- Online collections
- Social media
- Virtual tours
- Mobile apps
- Online games
- Teacher resources
- Home activities
- Live lectures
- Bitesize talks
- Educational apps
- Other

Page 4: Your museum's school visit offer during the pandemic

In this section you are asked questions about your museum's school visits offer during the covid19 pandemic.

Note: Think of "*your museum*" as the museum that you worked with/for most recently.

In your opinion, has the pandemic impacted your museum's relationships with schools? If yes, in what ways?



Which of the following has your museum been doing during the pandemic? Tick all that apply:

- Providing digital learning resources for use in the classroom
- Providing non-digital learning resources (e.g. loan boxes) for use in the classroom
- Remote sessions for classes (e.g. online talks, zoom seminars etc.)
- In-person sessions for classes on school premises (e.g. outreach talks, seminars, etc.)
- Online teacher CPD
- Curriculum advice for teachers and/or parents
- Resources to support families with home schooling
- Offering outdoor sessions
- Offering virtual museum tours
- Other

In addition to the above, has your museum continued to host school visits during the pandemic, in person or remotely?

- Yes, in person
- Yes, remotely
- Yes, both in person and remotely
- No
- I am not sure

Which of the following issues or challenges did your museum face in hosting school visits during the pandemic? Tick all that apply:

- Ensuring safety and wellbeing of staff, students and teachers
- Imposing safe social distancing within museum spaces
- Ensuring adequate sanitation of surfaces and objects
- Safe transport to the museum
- Competing with other curriculum priorities following school closures
- Low confidence / anxiety of teachers, students and parents related to covid safety
- Increased financial difficulties among school audiences
- Capacity to support smaller student groups
- Running sessions that require handling of museum objects or other artefacts in a covid-safe manner
- Reduced staff capacity due to furlough / redundancy
- Uncertainty over social distancing rules and regulations
- Other

How did your museum address these challenges?

Which of the following types of activity did your museum's school visit offer include during the pandemic? Tick all that apply:

- Self-guided student activities
- Teacher-guided activities
- Museum educator-guided activities
- Trails
- Critical thinking activities
- Hands-on activities
- Watching demonstrations or lectures
- Playing with interactive exhibits
- Gallery tours
- Games
- Digital activities
- Workshops
- Costumed activities / reenactments
- Performance / role-play
- Multisensory activities
- Other

Did your museum have to make any modifications to its school visit offer during the pandemic, other than to facilitate sanitation and social distancing on-site? If yes, what modifications were made?

Page 5: Digital activities and school visits during the pandemic

In this section you are asked questions about the inclusion of digital activities in school visits at your museum during the covid19 pandemic.

Note: Think of "*your museum*" as the museum that you worked with/for most recently.

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, [view as separate questions instead?](#)

How important do you think digital activities have been in your museum's school offer during the pandemic?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important	Not sure
Digital activities	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Which of the following have been used in digital activities of your museum's school visits during the pandemic?

- None, we did not offer digital activities during the pandemic
- Online collections
- Social media
- Virtual tours
- Mobile apps
- Online games
- Teacher resources
- Home activities
- Live lectures
- Bitesize talks
- Educational apps
- Other

Which of the following were a concern for your museum in developing digital activities for school visits during the pandemic? Tick all that apply:

- How to maintain the benefits of students' physical interactions with objects and artefacts
- How to maintain the benefits of students' interactions with museum experts
- How to maintain the benefits of learning outside the classroom
- Digital development costs
- Staff capacity
- Staff digital capabilities
- Other

In your opinion, what were the main advantages of integrating digital activities within your museum's school offer during the pandemic?

In your opinion, what were the main disadvantages of integrating digital activities within your museum's school offer during the pandemic?

Page 6: School visits after the pandemic: is there a future for blended learning?

In this section you are asked questions about your museum's school visits offer after the covid19 pandemic (i.e. once all lockdown restrictions are lifted and social distancing rules relaxed).

Note: Think of "your museum" as the museum that you worked with/for most recently.

Do you expect school visits to your museum post-pandemic to differ from pre-pandemic visits? If yes, in what ways do you expect them to differ?

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, [view as separate questions instead?](#)

How important do you think digital activities will be in your museum's post-pandemic school offer?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important	Not sure
Digital activities	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Which of the following do you think are likely to be used in digital activities of your museum's post-pandemic school visits?

- None, we will not offer digital activities post-pandemic
- Online collections
- Social media
- Virtual tours
- Mobile apps
- Online games
- Teacher resources
- Home activities
- Live lectures
- Bitesize talks
- Educational apps
- Other

Which would be the main reasons for your museum post-pandemic to offer blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities? Tick all that apply:

- There are no good reasons for offering blended school visits
- To support remote student engagement before and after the school visit
- To expand school outreach work beyond the museum's geographic reach
- To augment school outreach work with virtual museum experiences
- To reduce the environmental and financial costs of in-person visits
- To support home schooling
- To support students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- To support small groupwork
- To make school visits more interactive
- To increase teacher support
- To provide more specific support on curriculum topics
- To scaffold student understanding
- Other

Which of the following would be a challenge if your museum were to offer blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities post-pandemic? Tick all that apply:

- Digital development costs
- Staff capacity
- Staff digital capabilities
- Teacher digital capabilities
- School digital infrastructure
- Other

In your opinion, is there a future for blended school visit experiences that integrate digital activities in the longer term, post-pandemic? Please explain your answer.

Page 7: About you

In this section you are asked questions about your role in your museum.

Note: Think of "*your museum*" as the museum that you worked with/for most recently.

How would you describe your role in your museum?

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, [view as separate questions instead?](#)

How often does your role in your museum require you to undertake tasks/responsibilities related to the planning and delivery of school visits or other public engagement activities (e.g. drop-in workshops, lectures, etc.)?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
I am involved in the planning of school visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am involved in the delivery of school visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am involved in the planning of other public engagement activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am involved in the delivery of other public engagement activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is your current employment situation?

- Working from home
- Working at the museum
- Furloughed
- Other

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

We are developing a project to explore the use of inquiry learning in developing flexible, blended school visit experiences. If you are interested to know more or want to be involved in developing a case study project with us, please [email us](#) or insert your email below and we will contact you.

Final page

Your responses to this survey have been submitted.

If you need a formal record of your submission, please use the following details:

Completion receipt

Receipt number: 1-1-1
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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We truly value the information that you provided. Your responses will contribute to our better understanding of the issues and considerations that museums are currently grappling with in relation to blended school visits in the post-pandemic world.

Many thanks,

The Project Team

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