AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAMIC COLLECTIONS AND THEIR AUDIENCES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO BRITISH MUSEUMS

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines and discusses 'the accessibility of Islamic Collections and their relationships with their audiences'. To situate the thesis the author explores museum categorisation and archive debates, debates concerning museum authority including a discussion on Islamophobia, and the role of museums as communicators. The thesis engages with core arguments about how to demonstrate whether an object is Islamic or not, and how museums respond to Islamophobia, as both impact local communities coming from the same faith. Finally, the thesis considers why Islamic collections are often inaccessible as currently displayed and explores areas where the problem arises, offering recommendations. The purpose of this thesis is to identify knowledge gaps within museum practice in this area. The research methodology took two museums based in Oxford as case studies, the History of Science Museum (HSM) and the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM). It found that there is a lack of accessibility to Islamic Collections and discusses the underlying problems that cause this. The conclusions taken from this thesis are that many different elements contribute to accessibility limitations, from a lack of clarity in labelling to an inability to form connections to the collections. Also highlighted is the impact of museums' understanding of audience demographics of Islamic collections and objects, and how they use this knowledge to increase audience engagement. This thesis contributes to the field of museum studies by offering a new perspective on the categorisation of cultural and religious collections and delivering a more in-depth look into the relationship between Islamic collections and their visitors in the UK. This study can act as a foundation for further studies on Islamic Collection accessibility.

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بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

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Chapter I: Introduction

"We want to undermine negative attitudes that people bring with them. It is absurd for some people to claim that Islamic culture is a barbaric culture. If you see what there is here [in the V&A], you can't possibly think it is hostile to beauty or education and has no intellectual tradition."

Mark Jones, Director V&A, quoted in the New York Times, 2006

A museum is a learning space—for everyone—full of stories hidden within objects. When visitors enter that space, they deepen their existing understanding of the stories, or they become familiar with these stories. That is the essence of Mark Jones' statement: that museums are there to educate and to inform, and in doing so, "undermine negative attitudes,"—specifically in this case towards Islam. Similarly, Venetia Porter, Curator of Islamic and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art at the British Museum, and Rebecca Bridgman, Curator of Islamic and South Asian Art at Manchester Museum, speaking at two recent conferences on the objectives of Islamic collections, 'Power and Protection, Islamic Art and the Supernatural', and 'From Malacca to Manchester: Curating Islamic collections worldwide', concluded that essential work is needed to make Islamic collections more accessible to their audiences (Reeve 2019).

1.1 The Research Problem and Context

Rey, in her article entitled, 'Islam, museums, and the politics of representation in the west' (2019) states that, "this sudden *rinascimento* is no coincidence. Numerous scholars have demonstrated how, in light of the increased radicalisation of Muslim extremists and

Islamophobes, and the persistence of debates surrounding identity and integration since the 9/11 incident in the USA, museums have been mobilised to serve a peace-keeping agenda, taking it upon themselves to combat the tide of ignorance about Islam and offer a space for cultural reconciliation" (Rey 2019, 250). Rey carries on saying that, "museums have set out to challenge the stagnant and fanatical portrayal of Islam perpetuated by much of the media, revealing instead Islam's sophistication and generosity of spirit, what Director of the Louvre, Henri Loyrette calls 'the luminous face of Islam.'" (Rey 2019, 250).

This approach can also initiate debate within museums about Islamophobia with visitors and residents alike, refocusing a perception of Islam that can be dominated by refugees, undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers and other stereotyped portrayals in the media.

In her article, Rey further remarks that, "equally important has been the emphasis placed on cross-fertilizations between Islamic and Western cultures, a theme that is more evident in European museums, where many countries are still wrestling with questions of diversity. To increase interconnectedness, some museums have launched outreach activities that include lectures about Islamic art and history, and active support to their local Muslim communities through specific cultural programs—for example, "Multaka—Museum as Meeting Point," at the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin."–Worldwide, local Muslim communities are creating their own museums to represent Islam and are using museums as a medium to develop new ways of thinking about their identity in the West (Rey 2019, page 251). For example, the Islamic Museum of Australia (IMA) in Melbourne (2012); the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto (2014); and Le Musée des Civilisations de l'Islam (MUCIVI).

Despite these examples, one of the reasons which led the author to start researching Islamic collections was the lack of data on Muslim community projects in the sector in the UK. Some of the most renowned artists in the Muslim and Islamic traditions work in the UK,

connected to the Muslim Museum Initiative. The museums help visitors with acquiring some of the finest examples of modern Islamic art in Britain, whether they're just starting out or already have a sizable collection. In "Presenting Contemporary Islamic Art from Britain, Faith in Art; Craven Museum & Gallery, Skipton, Yorkshire, UK", ten modern British painters with a focus on Islamic art were included in the "Faith in Art exhibition at Craven Museum & Gallery. Embroidery, tiny and surreal artworks, fabric printing, wood, paper cutting, and three-dimensional works" were all on display, as well as geometry, calligraphy, and arabesque (Faith in Art; Craven, 2023). However, data on these community engagements with the museum sector has not been systematically collected.

To achieve what Mark Jones, Venetia Porter and Rebecca Bridgman advocate, visitors need to be able to rely on the expertise, knowledge, and communication skills of museums and their staff—combined with any prior personal knowledge—to continue their educational journey. When museums work with 'articles of faith'—that is, items with a clear religious significance— or objects which are intended or perceived by adherents as devotional in some way, there is a responsibility and duty to ensure accuracy and consistency in how objects are treated, and a legitimate expectation of the same. In the preface to *Religious Objects in Museums*, Paine (2013) determined that museums—at that point—still largely ignored religion as a primary concept of collections.

By 2015, Paine's concern was that "there is no longer the need for a constant argument for museums to recognise the religious context but instead there needs to be discussion on how this religious context can *enhance and enrich the visitor's experience*… [emphasis author's own] there needs to be more thought put into how religious objects are interpreted and displayed for a secular society." (Paine 2015, page 15) This indicates a shift in how museums were approaching the classification of religious objects or those which were made as acts or

representations of faith—a method which highlights rather than begins to address the problem. Reeve (2017) laments how such objects are not utilised, but instead "taken advantage of [to] decrease widespread public prejudice and ignorance" (Reeve, 2017, page 170).

The way Islamic objects are displayed and referenced—how curators and museum staff permit engagement with the object from Muslim and non-Muslim attendees— is vital to the success of the Islamic collection, and to the fulfilment of the museum's role and objectives. Islamic objects incorrectly or incompletely displayed and referenced may come across as alien and lacking in context, even with a label provided for the sole purpose of information. This is sometimes due to the objects being treated and displayed as pieces of art and placing them out of the context of, "other faiths and cultures" (Reeve 2019). There have been no controlled studies which explicitly compare Muslim and non-Muslim interactions with Islamic collections, and that is an issue which it is hoped may be addressed later, but it is first necessary to establish to what extent the problems of classification exist—and why—and what might be done to begin to address this problem. The author recognises there are limitations to any proposals arising from the data and conclusions derived from this research, and addresses these in the relevant chapters.

As the author began her employment at UK museums, she saw ethnographic collections where religious and cultural artefacts were being treated as if they were equivalent. There also appeared to be no clear framework on how to distinguish between different ethnographic collections within professional museum guidelines. These are problems because they undermines the collection's original meaning, or mask an objects religious significance by prioritising secular cultural uses and reference points. This is especially problematic for religions which are still widely followed, where it should be a priority to relay information as

accurately and authentically as possible to avoid misunderstandings and flawed interpretations. As Paine, quoting O'Neill, notes:

> "Having shown how good intentions fell victim to a very traditional curatorial approach, O'Neill goes on to criticize the gallery and to analyse the results. He makes what are, in the context of current sensitivities over Islam, very serious criticisms. Above all, the gallery fails to meet the consultees' desire to 'see Muslim cultures from the inside'; the perspective is exclusively curatorial. Even more seriously, 'The whole display could be read (by both Muslims and non-Muslims) as showing that Islam's days of greatness are over and its current state is one of decline, meriting no respect—a view often represented in the media. Muslim consultees specifically asked for this to be countered by the inclusion of contemporary Islamic art and images of Islamic culture, a request which was denied.' Thus, great art objects do not speak for themselves, they respond to their visitors, and the message they can be understood to give can be dangerous indeed. Moreover, the gallery misses its golden opportunity to address the 'Islamic' of its title as well as just the 'art': 'The narrow, singular perspective through which the material is seen also fails to take the opportunity to evoke Muslim spirituality, as Seeing Salvation in the National Gallery in 2000 had done for Christianity" (Alberti, 2009, page 15).

It follows therefore that any audience visiting museums with these types of collections should be able to distinguish between religious and cultural collections and should be able to understand in what way objects are Islamic.

Moreover, visitors from the same culture or background as the collections should feel accurately represented and be able to engage without feeling needlessly offended – they should be valued stakeholders. The author became interested in this research after reading "There have

been histories of museums for as long as there have been museums" (Alberti, 2009: 1). The author thinks that there are no museums without history, and there is no history without the existence of humanity. Since the nineteenth century there has been a growing body of literature that recognises the critical value of museums. Indeed, the museum's stakeholders have been an object of research since the 1920s, where a stakeholder could be any staff member such as curators, conservators, or its visitors whose focus will be on the collections, displays, and gallery settings. Therefore, this thesis will open this area again as a debate on how to make Islamic collections more accessible – to a more diverse body of stakeholders – so that they can recognize their history and their humanity (contra Islamophobia).

For any museum's mission, equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) need to be goals. This applies not only to representation of collections, but also in the sector. The author notes the continued employment gap in the museum sector in terms of curators not sharing the same religious background as the collections they manage—something Rey identifies as a problem for the consistency of referencing and information.

1.2 Researcher Positionality

Drawing on insider-outsider debates in research methodology the author reflects on the potential impact of her positionality on the research (Knott 2010; Cabezon 2004).

The author's personal experience of Islam and of working in the Museum sector for over two decades has prompted this research. The author's personal interest is a reflection of this combined experience, and aims to shed new light on curating issues surrounding Islamic collections in a European museum setting, specifically in the UK. Specifically, the curating issue surrounding Islamic collections is the lack of understanding throughout the museum sector on how to display Islamic objects in an accessible and engaging format for a

predominately Western audience. This is an assumption that the author is testing in the thesis based on first-hand experience. In her twenty-six years of study and through her career path in various museums and schools abroad and in the UK, this is appears as a commonality, and that is why from a scholarly point of view it is worth investigating but has not been properly addressed to date. Her professional experience, giving her a professional understanding of museums and how the labelling of objects works generally, .combined with the interviews conducted with other museum professionals for this thesis, informs the professional perspective of the subsequent findings.

Along with this, the author also has an insight into what it means to communicate something as Islamic. Due to her experience as a Muslim woman—both generally, and specifically within the professional context—she feels the questions about what is classified, labelled and communicated as Islamic, and what that means for the visitor engaging with the object and the collection, are important to address. This means she has day-to-day experiences of Muslims – both independently and individually (Loud, 2013).

As a museum professional, the author sees how the term 'Islamic' is used currently in the museum sectors in which she operates—from her own anecdotal experience, the use of the term appears less precise than with other, similar terms, something which might create confusion rather than clear educational communication, and so decided to research whether this was true in other museums, and if so, what might be done to begin to address this (Loud, 2013).

Professional interest and insight, together with personal experience as a practising Muslim Arab woman perhaps serve to make the author more aware of the misunderstandings that occur when the term 'Islamic' is used carelessly, inaccurately or incompletely in the museum setting; however, the author accepts that, as a practising Muslim, she may have a

specific view of what constitutes as ‘truly Islamic’, so must be aware of any preconceptions or fixed notions before beginning to address the question of definitive declarations (Loud, 2013). There are recognised and varied religious authorities which might be sought in assessing final criteria for the Islamic nature of an object.

The author's insights, which make her the right candidate to conduct this research, also bring an awareness that we all come with our own unconscious biases and influences. The author's positionality does not give her the sole authority to pronounce on what is or is not Islamic—to avoid biases, the author suggests that there should be opinions from across the Islamic world to avoid prioritising a singular viewpoint (Loud, 2013).

The author recognises that there might be a barrier that comes along with unconscious biases but makes a conscious effort to make sure this does not influence the research. For example, the author believes that talking about different Islamic schools, Sunni and Shia, will only increase division within the Islamic world, and consequently does not define herself as either. This research aims to help efforts to bring together Muslims from all schools of thought to talk about similarities in Islam and not the differences—and to allow non-Muslims to engage with the whole faith rather than a singular representation of it—and sees collections within the museum, and the way in which objects are presented and classified, as a platform for this debate (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013). This means the author will regard the term ‘Islamic’ from many different Islamic perspectives, precisely to avoid any biases. So again, although the author has special insight as a Muslim and special insight because she works in the museum sector, she also is aware of potential blind spots simply due to who she is and will be making sure these do not negatively influence the way data is presented or interpreted.

Due to her immigrant background from Iraq, the author can recognise the collection roots, such as Islamic, cultural, or ritual, which gives a special insight but also potentially

creates certain pre-formed views about how things should be done. Along with this, people working in museum sectors may have ideas about how labelling should happen, regardless of faith, and what the label is to say. Some people will be working with very traditional museums that provide information, and some people work in more modern museums with a more liberal interpretation of what should go on labels (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013). The kind of museums that the author has experienced will inform her view: the author is aware of this and actively bears it in mind when analysing data and going through relevant literature.

1.3 Wider Literature

This thesis discusses the relationship between audiences and Islamic collections. In this chapter, four background issues that fall under the overall topic surrounding Islamic Collections will be discussed. These subjects were chosen because of the relevance they have with the overall topic of this dissertation and provide a more in-depth analysis on what issues surround this topic. The subject matter of all four issues relate to the way in which Islamic collections are used, displayed and labelled within British and European museums and, importantly, the potential of the Islamic collections that has been recognised but not to the fullest highest extent.

The following discussion consists of four different subjects based on theory: 'What is Islam as a religion?', 'What are Islamic objects?', 'What is Islamic art?', and 'What is Islamophobia, and how has it affected visitor interactions with Islamic collections?'. The author has a particular focus on Crispin Paine, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, and John Reeve, and their academic works and theories. These researchers have been highlighted by the author because their previous research is relevant to this thesis. However, in addition to these, the

author has consulted a number of other sources, including guidance provided by academic and museum staff.

1.3.1 Delineating Islam

One of the first objectives the author sought to satisfy was to define the terms ‘Islam’ and ‘Islamic Objects’ and how these terms relate to the collections being discussed. This thesis is about Islamic collections, so for the reader to understand the discussion the author needs to start with what Islam and Islamic objects are, as doing so provides context for the reader.

The author therefore starts with this verse from the Quran which is written in both Arabic and English.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الإِسْلاَمُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جاءهمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَرِيعُ‌الْحِسَابِ

Quran: meaning: “Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam, and those to whom the Book had been given did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the communications of Allah then surely Allah is quick in reckoning”. (Soura 3- Aya 19 Quran Juza 3:52).

The unbiased definition of Islam as provided by the Oxford Wordpower dictionary is that Islam is “The religion of Muslim people. Islam teaches that there is only one God and that Muhammed is His Prophet” (Oxford Wordpower 1998: 409). When compared with an American English definition, an almost identical summary was provided: “the religious faith of Muslims including belief in Allah as the sole deity and in Muhammed as his prophet” (Merriam-Webster 2020). These definitions show this is the most basic understanding of Islam. Furthermore, the Quran is central to the lives of all Muslims as the divinely revealed message of Islam, and functions both as a historical source and a contemporary book guiding lives. Therefore, we can use references in the Quran to categorise and locate museum objects and

collections in a particular historical and geographical context, as well as recognise references to and use of Quran to locate objects or collections as Islamic.

In this review, we will also explore whether an unbiased definition of Islam still mirrors the understanding of Islam that is held by Western general publics after the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, which will be discussed in the last section of the background chapter in more depth. Islam cannot solely be defined by the people who follow it, as this would not mirror the level of exposure the religion has had on a global scale. There is a much wider perspective to be analysed in order to truly understand what Islam is to all groups in modern-day society. It is possible to explore perceptions of Islam from a Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu point of view. However, it is important to situate Islam in the secular context of the West, because Islam is no longer a separate phenomenon, unconnected with Western society. Instead, it has become intertwined with the structure of society and therefore has influenced many communities. The larger the group of people who have been exposed to Islam, the more complex the definition may become. Understanding the complexity of the word 'Islam' will assist us in the exploration of the effects of Islamophobia on visitor-collection interactions.

Several artefacts now housed in museums were once displayed in religious buildings like temples, shrines, and monasteries, and they held religious significance to the communities that made and utilised them. Carol Duncan, an art historian, elaborated on the parallels between a contemporary museum and a temple, although a secular one. Museum-goers engage in a ritualised process that "structures a museum's essential meanings, its meanings as a museum." The museum is a liminal area where the visitor might have a life-altering experience similar to those advocated by other faiths (revelation, enlightenment, spiritual elevation). The fact that, like churches, museums display items with religious value only serves to bolster the comparisons between the two (Sauthoff, 2019).

1.3.2 What are Islamic objects?

The author will consider Islamic objects and their position in museums from a social point of view. In order to do this, there needs to be an understanding of what an object is and what an Islamic object is. Museum objects are something which has been musealised—the museum transforms the artefact into an object (EVE Museology 2015). An Islamic object is an object that has a link to Islamic religion and/or culture in any way. These are the general categories that can be applied to objects and provide one method of distinguishing between them.

"The power of religion to move and motivate people means that St. Mungo is more than an attempt to create an interesting exhibition. It is an intervention in society, a contribution towards creating greater tolerance and mutual respect among those of different faiths and of none" (Mark O'Neil (1993:22). St Mungo is an example of a museum which does not mainly focus on the aesthetics of religious objects. This is relevant to the author's discussion of Islamic objects because this is the approach all museums should take when approaching the display of Islamic collections.

There are museums which have mixed displays of objects from different eras, such as the Pitt Rivers Museum. These are the objects which have been associated with some controversy and faced many issues during the colonial period due to prejudice that was prevalent during that period of time. There were some people who believed that these objects functioned as erotica, there were some who believed that the objects are examples of heathen savagery (Orzech: 2015). Some museums demonstrate the pedagogy of progress. In any setting, the purpose of the displays is to make visitors understand and interpret the meaning behind the objects. There are museums which have objects presented in such a way that

they demonstrate the story of the object and present a detailed history of the object (Orzech: 2015). Most museums try to make new developments such as changing the category of the Islamic objects and by presenting a vast variety of objects which belong to different religions together. In most of the literature and books, religion is, "a modern interpretation of a variety of cultural phenomena" (Osterhammel: 2014).

There are museums in the world which are dedicated to presenting religion. These museums demonstrate the similarities and differences among religions which were present in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Segall: 2014: 55). Museums have provided a narrative through which the Muslim and non-Muslim audiences associate themselves with the objects. It is said that when a person walks into a museum, they walk into a narrative (Osterhammel: 2014). The narrative can be a theme which is supported by many voices. These different perspectives help the visitors to understand the domain from which the objects are taken , and about the projects they may be looking at or interacting with. On the other hand, the narrative could be a question, a discussion, a voice-over or a debate. The placement of the objects and the structure of museums have been strategically crafted to enhance these narratives and provide the visitor with a more personalized experience (Alexander: 2017).

Depending on the structure and setting of the museum, there are museums which provide a chance for their visitors to narrate their own stories and be a part of the discussion instead. This can be helpful in understanding the merits and demerits of the narration in which the visitor is present in (Segall: 2014: 55). The first public museum which implemented this blueprint is the Museum of Religions in Marburg, Germany, in which there are comparative studies and conflicting religious objects placed for display. The collection which has been placed in this museum belongs to many religions for which rooms have been allocated (Fleming & Mann: 2014). These religions are monotheistic such as Christianity,

Islam, and Judaism, however there is a room specified for the other religions, many of which stem from Asia (Herrin: 2017). This is the biggest section in the museum, which holds the objects and history of a number of Asian religions such as Tenrikyo, Shinto, Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism. As the founder of this museum was a Buddhist, there is a major emphasis on the Buddhist religion (Herrin: 2017). Walking through the exhibitions, visitors can run through their own narrative and interpret the objects in their own unique way by seeing them in a more casual setting.

Following on from the general definitions, the author will now consider what an Islamic object means to different groups of people. The nature of Islamic object interpretations remains unclear so, as in the previous subheading, the way Islamic objects could be viewed by Muslims and non-Muslim group will be explored and analysed.

Crispin Paine (2000), in his book *Godly Things*, writes in the introduction to Religious Items in Museums that he has come to the conclusion that museums deal with religion behind a shroud of ignorance. Previous studies of Islamic objects have not explicitly dealt with the theory that the multiple different perspectives and ways that an Islamic object can be viewed can affect Islamic collection accessibility. Paine (2000) attempted to address this theory but there has been little quantitative analysis of this theory, which the author has added to in the methodology of this MA. Up to now there has been far too little attention paid to different perceptions of Islamic objects through comparison with one's own religion and beliefs.

However, through John Reeve's analysis of the new Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world in the British Museum, the theory of perspectives of Islamic objects through visitors' own beliefs has been explored (Reeve 2019). It is important to consider the contrast in the perception of Islamic objects to people who hold the religion as a belief, and people who will consider it as a 'grey area' of knowledge. However, John Reeve brings in the

importance of the Muslim perception of the Islamic collections. There has been some evidence to suggest that Muslim audiences do not engage with museums as a whole. This could be down to many factors, such as lack of personal connection/interest to any collection, dispute with the way Islamic collections are portrayed and interpreted, or even the method in which some objects were obtained. An Islamic object to a Muslim often has emotional connotations and significance to them. Therefore, when an Islamic collection is displayed as alien, it can feel like a personal alienation of Muslims as a community. Most studies on Islamic collections have only focused on how to make them more accessible to visitors who are unfamiliar with the Islamic world and have failed to address that in doing so there has been neglect in terms of accessibility to Muslims themselves. John Reeve renews this interest in the research field and points out that there needs to be a bridge between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds, where this bridge is the new perspective that should be used to display Islamic collections (Reeve 2019). The most important of these criticisms is that Reeve failed to notice that there needs to be more management from external sources to guide museum curators in the right direction in terms of displaying Islamic objects. There needs to be more than just an acknowledgement of the bridge that needs to be built—the leaders of the museum community need to go a step further and provide instructions on how it can be built to form a blueprint that can be replicated in similar secular societies across the West. However, there have been no controlled studies which explicitly compare Muslim and non-Muslim interactions with Islamic collections, which is a gap the author acknowledges and aims to fill.

Nonetheless, the majority of visitors to museums in the West will be from non-Muslim backgrounds, so the way Islamic objects come across to this particular demographic is vital to the success of the Islamic collection. Islamic objects may come across as alien and lacking in context, even with a label provided for the sole purpose of information. This is sometimes due

to the objects being treated and displayed as pieces of art and placing them out of the context of "other faiths and cultures" (Reeve 2019). This leads to the lack of understanding of Islamic collections by the visitors, museum staff and curators and has become a classic problem in the museum community. The lack of expertise of Islamic collections is at the heart of this problem. This is a problem that is being actively addressed through the 'Specialist Support Scheme' (Museum Association 2015) which was put into place to help museums to. "Unlock the potential of their Islamic art" (Bridgman 2015). Recent evidence suggests that schemes like this have been effective as shown in the 2012 'Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam' held in the British Museum which drew in 66% BAME audiences (Museum Association 2015), which is a large increase in the wider category non-Muslim visitors. Paine (2015) points out that there is no longer the need for a constant argument for museums to recognise the religious context but instead there needs to be discussion on how this religious context can enhance and enrich the visitor's experience. This is a harder task to carry out for visitors that do not feel attachment to the Islamic world. It should also be noted that Islamic objects can fall under non-Islamic categories as well or can be adapted to celebrate and represent other faiths. These objects should be taken advantage of as it can decrease the "widespread public prejudice and ignorance" (Reeve 2017).

Most studies fail to specify the implications of not addressing the nature of modern-day society. Therefore, as Paine points out, there needs to be more thought put into how religious objects are interpreted and displayed for a secular society (Paine 2015). This is one of the main themes in this dissertation, predominantly in the methodology. There has been research taken on by the Museum Association to increase the relevancy and empowerment of all museum collections nationwide (Museum Association 2018). This is a vital step towards understanding Islamic objects and the collections they form, and identifying synoptic links

between Islamic objects and objects of other cultures. This will mean Islamic collections have a larger social impact, embed knowledge of Islam, and create a legacy within the museum sector. An example of this is the Albulkhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World at the British Museum. This gallery has an unconventional display of the Islamic World and does not focus purely on the aesthetics. Within the display, barriers are broken down between "high art and ethnography," and between modern and ancient time periods (Reeve 2019). In addition, a dialogue is established between Islamic cultures and their, "predecessors and their neighbours" (Reeve 2019). There is a growing body of literature which recognises that Islamic objects have many links with other cultures. This is exactly the presentation of Islamic objects that museums across Europe should be striving to emulate. This allows for Western interpretation of the collections to be used, which is the viewpoint which is influenced by Western values, whilst at the same time still preserving the true roots and meanings of the Islamic objects. Connecting Islamic galleries to other cultures is becoming a growing trend within the museum sector, with a significant example being the British Museum moving their 'Islamic World' gallery from an isolated corner to the heart of the museum to demonstrate how "the cultures interconnect" (Harris 2015).

1.3.3 What is Islamic art?

Islamic art is not the main focus of this thesis; however, it is important to be able to distinguish between different Islamic collection pieces. As the author mentioned earlier, any lack of precision in Islamic art stems from the different meanings of Islam. There are two entirely different meanings of Islam, one is "peace" and the other is "submission". These sum up Islamic studies and Muslim beliefs. For the people of the West, it may be difficult to

combine these two words together to form the essence of what is considered as a united religion (Amer & Bagasra, 2013:134).

The literature suggests that there is a need to focus on the diversity of uses of Islamic art and use this to help us to recognize the religious and the cultural influences of each object, and then to enable this to be appreciated by audiences. In the preface to his *Religious Objects in Museums,* Paine mentioned Godly Things and concluded that museums still largely ignore religion as primary concept of collections. Paine's essays about museums and religion were intended "to treat this subject" but unfortunately the world had changed dramatically and opinions on religion have changed since the publication of these essays. Western Europe moved away from religion to a certain extent, however elsewhere in the world, countries use religion in politics. "Museums, therefore, had to change according to public interest, a new recognition of their political role and social potential, and new consideration to museums visitors." Also, he concluded, "there were signs of change, and that was an important role for museums to play in what was always a central part of the human experience" (Paine, 2013; page 2-3). Paine is describing how essential museums were to helping societies adapt to this societal change and allowing religion to gain a different reputation in this more secular society.

1.3.4 Islamophobia

Over the last two decades, there has been a dramatic increase in media coverage of Islam and the Muslim community, both in the West and the East. It is safe to say that since the tragic event of 9/11, there have been negative connotations attached to the Muslim community, especially in the West. The Muslim community is the diaspora of Muslim people coming together and interacting with one another on a regular basis. The impact of this change in

perception of the Muslim community in the West also reached museums and changed the dynamic of visitor interaction with Islamic collections—even if it was more a subtle gradual change rather than a more prominent switch. In this section, the author will discuss the implication of Islamophobia in the West on visitor interactions with Islamic collections (Lean, 2019). A more detailed discussion on its impact and relationship to the museum sector is in the background chapter.

Although a complex term, to define Islamophobia for the purposes of this thesis, it is the irrational prejudice against Islam and Muslims, frequently as a political force (Open Society Foundations 2019). As the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (2018) said "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness." To heighten the level of precision and set aside the focus on irrationality, some researchers replace Islamophobia with the two analytically distinct categories of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim. Anti-Islam can be defined as 'framing Islam as a homogenous, totalitarian ideology which threatens [Western] civilization', whereas anti-Muslim can be defined as 'oversimplified beliefs, negative feelings and evaluations of Muslims as a group' (Lean, 2019). However, for our purposes Islamophobia captures the wider context in which Islamic objects might be viewed.

Across Europe, the levels of expression of prejudice vary from country to country, from discrimination in employment and education to verbal and physical attacks on people and places of worship. The reason Islamophobia is still an issue in Europe now, almost 19 years after 9/11, is because of the immigration and integration of Muslims into many European cultures. The Muslim community is often used as a scapegoat for people to express their xenophobia, as the discussion of the terrorist attacks that were justified by Islamic extremists portray Muslims as the enemy. The media coverage also plays a part in this, as it portrays

stereotypes and generalisations about Muslims that are not accurate and fuels further Islamophobia and xenophobia (Open Society Foundation 2019). The effects of Islamophobia on societies across Europe is that the values of non-discrimination, equality, solidarity, etc. which were once inherent in European societies are being disregarded. It is therefore likely to have an impact on the museum sector.

However, in response to increasing Islamophobia, the Louvre is hosting exhibits of Islamic art. The Louvre is spearheading a project to help people have a more sophisticated knowledge of Islam. In the next four months, there will be 18 art exhibits devoted to Islamic art, spread across 18 locations. All 19 invited artists are from different countries, including "Egypt, Algeria, Iran, and Turkey." Approximately sixty of the Louvre's most significant works will be on loan throughout these four months. In addition to pieces from regional and national collections, these graphic works will be shown in a group exhibition. By showing that "the culture is both sacred and profane, more diversified than the Arab civilisation, and contains portraits of individuals, including the Prophet Muhammad," Yannick Lintz seeks to dispel long-held stereotypes about Islam and the Arab world. An accompanying short video is shown at each exhibition, highlighting locations significant to the pieces on display. Associations and religious groups will work together to jointly operate discussion platforms for pupils and many others (Open Society Foundations, 2019).

1.3.4.1 *Orientalism*

The term "Orientalism" refers to the practise of emulating or depicting elements from Eastern cultures through a Western imaginary that stereotypes them as mysterious, exoticised and fundamentally inferior to Western culture. It may be found in diverse fields such as fine

arts, philosophy, and cultural anthropology. Western authors, designers, and painters are most often responsible for these portrayals. One of the numerous subgenres of 19th-century academic art was depictions of the Middle East in Orientalist painting, and writers in Western nations also showed an interest in writing about exotic places and cultures (Yaşdağ, 2021). Museums' exoticising or stereotyped depictions of the Middle East has frequently been part of its supporting of existing power systems and hierarchies. Others have criticised the museum sector for its representation of the Middle East and failure to interact with opposing ideas (Abu El-Haj, 2019).

1.3.4.2 *Causes of Islamophobia*

It has been suggested that Islamophobia may be attributed to a number of different causes. For instance, a basic degree of ignorance about Islam, Muslims and their religion, language and images used in the media, and to ensure that Muslims and non-Muslims do not come into physical touch with one another (Finlay and Hopkins, 2020). Therefore, museums have attempted in recent decades have striven for "a growing rhetoric of cultural tolerance" in response, although it has been claimed that this presentation of Islamic heritage is often disconnected from both museological developments and modern geopolitical events (Berg & Krinell, 2021).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This chapter summarises how the author came to identify the problem, briefly the context and background to the issue, the question of positionality—in both a personal and a professional sense—and the necessary limitations of any findings and conclusions. The following chapter addresses the wider social and cultural context in which this discussion takes

place—covering what is Islam as a religion, what are Islamic objects, what is Islamic art, and what is Islamophobia—this last addressing how misrepresentations or misconceptions of Islam have affected visitor interactions with Islamic collections. The third chapter contains the background, where the author considers the most relevant literature on religious collections in general, and Islamic collections specifically. This chapter also draws on wider reading in the field, including a more in-depth discussion on Islamophobia, Orientalism, and the role of museums in educating and challenging prejudice. In the fourth chapter, the author discusses and justifies the choice and use of the mixed method way to collect the data, using UK museums as a case study but with a particular focus on two significant Oxford museums—the History of Science Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum—for her analysis. The author used a mixed method to collect data to capture information from all angles and comes highly recommended from other university colleagues and tutors for museum research work. These museums were chosen because they each have a large 'Islamic' (or labelled as such) collection from scientific and various cultural backgrounds, and staff who have direct experience of these collections and of their labelling, who therefore make good subjects for interview. Their locational proximity to the author also meant that repeated contact was possible. The fifth chapter presents the data collected from visitors' surveys, staff questionnaires and staff interviews for both museums, the History of Science Museum (HSM) and the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM), and analyses to what extent the data establishes the nature and extent of the problem, as well as the key components of it (necessary for identifying the appropriate corrective measures). The subsequent chapter presents the author's findings and conclusions and offers suggestions for what might be considered clearly Islamic features or objects, what criteria might be more difficult to determine, and where religious authority might be sought in those difficult-to-answer cases. In short, the author describes how a systematic framework could be developed for use across the

museum sector both in collaboration and in accordance with Muslim communities. The final chapter outlines areas of future research, and questions to be examined and addressed which will contribute to such a framework being established.

1.5 Conclusion

To conclude, objects at a museum have tales to tell, and those stories may teach us something new. Those who go there either gain a deeper knowledge of the stories or are introduced to them for the first time. Museums have been enlisted to serve a peace-keeping agenda, taking it upon themselves to combat the tide of ignorance about Islam and provide a space for cultural reconciliation, in light of the increased radicalisation of Muslim extremists and Islamophobes as well as the persistence of debates surrounding identity and integration since the 9/11 incident in the USA. Thus, visitors of the same cultural background as the collections often feel welcome and respected by the exhibits. After reading, "there have been histories of museums for as long as there have been museums," the author became interested in this investigation.

Chapter II: Background: The Wider Museum Context

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, museums have attempted to resolve the issues raised in chapter I. One institution that has been affected by a growing cultural diversity in the Netherlands is the Tropenmuseum, which has undergone a number of changes as a direct consequence. The Tropenmuseum, like most other museums in the Netherlands, did not report a significant number of tourists of non-Western origin. In 2003, these individuals were responsible for less than 1% of visitors from the entire population of Amsterdam, yet they made up 33% of the city's population (children excluded) (Äikäs, 2019). During this time, the topic of Islam was a contentious debate in the Netherlands. One exhibition at the Tropenmuseum, Urban Islam, aimed to make a contribution to the current conversation by examining contemporary Islam in a variety of areas. It featured the stories of five young adults who were Muslims from various regions of the globe and how they tried to discover their own Islamic identities in the backdrop of a society that was gradually becoming more globalised.

Even though the Tropenmuseum intended for the show to be geared towards a Muslim audience, the participants in the exhibition were more concerned with questions of representation. There was an unexpectedly low number of people who considered themselves to be tourists visiting Urban Islam. They regarded the event as a unique opportunity to impart to the wider public a perspective on Islam that was not solely a Muslim one as the Tropen museum didn’t have enough Muslim artefacts to display in order to eliminate the concept of Islamophobia from the western visitors (Hillenbrand, 2021). On the other hand, HSM and PRM both used more successful strategies in the fight against Islamophobia as they had multiple artefacts to display regarding Islamic religion to clear the concept of western’s visitor. Overall, it seems that a desire for the exotic and orientalist mentality of the 19th century still affects

exhibits in contemporary museums, particularly those dedicated to Islamic art. This makes sense when considering the historical context, as the history of personal and public "Islamic" artefacts is closely related to the notion of a contemporary museum.

Ian Heath emphasises how, in many cases, the perspective from which exhibits and displays are organised only repurposes the Orientalist paradigm (Khan, 2020). Specifically, this means that the ‘Islam’ on display often appears monolithic and unchanging across time and location. The author makes this point abundantly clear while talking about a text panel at the Royal Museum of Scotland: the panel, which is titled "Over glaze painted ceramics: Iraq 9th-20th centuries" (Khan, 2020), draws a link between the work of Iraqi potters from the 9th century and potters working in Iraq today without providing additional contextualisation (Äikäs, 2019). Instead, the author contends that a love of aesthetics takes the place of a knowledge of Islam in these museums as a result of the methods through which the artefacts are presented and discussed.

On the other hand, given that the primary objective of religious tourism is to visit prominent religious sites, the traveller’s experience is vastly improved and enriched by taking into account the religious context. The participants in these kinds of vacations are often motivated to travel because they have religious or philosophical goals that they want to accomplish while they are away. It's possible that one might want to travel to museums to visit Islamic artefacts simply because they want to learn about other cultures, faiths, sacred artefacts and so on, but religion also provides individuals with a sense that their lives have a purpose, a structure within which they may organise their ideas, and, in the majority of instances, a community who share their beliefs and experiences and with whom they can discuss their religion (Kim et al., 2019).

This chapter will highlight Islamic art galleries at museums across the world that have recently undergone renovations featuring Islamic art and culture, as well as the first ever Islamic gallery in Britain. It will, however, discuss the religious objects existing in British museums with reference to Islamic artefacts, as well as the perspective utilized by British museums to exhibit those Islamic antiques, as Muslims continue to deem certain things sacred. The Quran, the Prophet's personal belongings, the Ka'aba, the tower, the Quran stand, the minbar, and the black rock are among these items. In Islamic art, calligraphy and concepts, rather than anthropomorphic animal forms, are used as ornamental elements. Yet, it will depict essays translating artefact-based literature, as well as museums and their religious quandary. It will also emphasize audience involvement with Islamic collections, as well as the role Islamic museums have played in audience participation. Finally, it will explain how museums have worked ceaselessly to engage audiences in Islamic but sacred artifacts.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Museums Featuring Islamic Art & Culture

Islamic art galleries at museums located all over the globe have recently undergone renovations. The aesthetic appeal of Islamic works of art was traditionally prioritised above their historical significance when deciding which pieces to display in museums. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is not shown in Islamic art; there are restrictions on the depiction of humans and animals; and a significant amount of mosaics and tile floors are used in Islamic architectural design. The wealth of Islamic culture, both in the present and in the past, will be shown in exhibits at new Islamic art galleries like "The Louvre, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Pergamon Museum." These museums are known for their collections of art from across the world. The strategy plan recommends that spectators neither consider the artwork in isolation from the culture that produced it, nor should they concentrate on the most recent tragedy or outrage that occurred in the region. Museums enable visitors to establish and deepen their personal interactions with the art by telling the tale through several voices rather of just one. This is done by conveying the story through various voices (Hillenbrand, 2021). There were exhibits on urban Islam at the Dutch Trope Museum. These urban Islam exhibits included the personal experiences of Muslims who lived in four different cities. People were able to perceive the dark side of Islamic discourse and their practises thanks to the exhibits, despite the fact that their ideals were different. Francis, 2012 discovered, when doing research on the special collection Hajj: Pilgrimage to the Soul of Islam that was presented by the British Gallery in 2012, that it featured Muslim anecdotes in order to create a "multi-voiced" narrative. In addition, there were phrases from movies that demonstrated how the Hajj is performed in modern times as well as statements from pilgrims from throughout history. There were barely 3% of people who identified as Muslims among the visitors to the British Museum. However,

over 140,000 individuals participated in the Hajj, also known as the Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and about 47% of those persons were Muslims. The British Museum strives to educate visitors about Islamic art and culture via its permanent Islamic World Galleries, which are constantly available to the public (Hillenbrand, 2021).

However, it is problematic why collections from the Muslim world are separated into "art" and "ethnography" categories, a process that has its roots in European museum practises from the 19th century. As a corollary, the instructional material of the Muslim world has been divided among many types of museums, clearly defining boundaries between social strata, geographic regions, and chronological eras. Moreover, two approaches to museum representation emerged from this separation, each with a unique perspective on how the Islamic world belongs into the larger tale of international artistic and cultural history. Many museums are constantly testing with a more integral model to the cultural artefacts of the Muslim world, notably the British Museum.

2.2.2 The first Islamic Gallery in Britain

The "John Addis Gallery" of the Islamic World, the major repository for Islamic artefacts at the British Museum, first opened its doors to the public in the year 1989. Previously, the Islamic exhibits at the British Museum were spread among a range of rooms on both the main level and the upper floor. However, those rooms have now been combined into a single location. The British Museum was able to show off its Islamic artefacts thanks to the addition of "The John Addis Gallery," which provided more room for displaying Islamic works of art. Since it first opened its doors, "The John Addis Gallery" has remained almost unchanged despite the passage of more than three decades. In 2016, the Interpretation Department of the

British Museum conducted an evaluation of "the John Addis Gallery." (Milani, and Adrahtas, 2020).

The Interpretation team goes through each gallery and conducts an evaluation in order to make plans for next events and determine how successful a specific endeavour has been in achieving its objectives. In 2005, the interpretive team was established in order to produce better galleries for the British Museum. The team's mission is to encourage visitors to take an active role in the museum experience, examine objects with a greater level of attention, and uncover something significant that they might have missed otherwise. It is vital to conduct an evaluation of the gallery in order to identify how visitors interact with the exhibits. To swiftly gain and maintain interest is included in the definition of "engage." After evaluating "the John Addis Gallery," the Interpretive team discovered a number of problems that had been occurring consistently (Porter, and Greenwood, 2020). Since the show was located in a remote part of the museum, it did not attract many people who had not planned to see it. The crowd seemed to be perplexed by the exhibition's subject matter. Muslims who were present at the event were of the opinion that the framework was lacking. The lengthy texts that accompanied the demonstrations left the audience members thinking about the people who utilised the things and how they did so. Due to the absence of crucial artefacts, viewers were unable to comprehend the logical framework that the museographer team had envisioned for the collection. These artefacts serve as entrance points into the more extensive exhibits that are included inside the collection. Because the majority of the porcelain artwork on display at "The John Addis Gallery" came from the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East, visitors were only given a partial picture of Islamic culture. The display was responsible for the reduction of almost half of the visitors' expansive conceptions about the Islamic world (Porter and Greenwood, 2020).

2.2.3 Religion-Related Museum Exhibits That Feature Islamic Artefacts

Following the paths taken by Islamic collections in the Western world demonstrates how objects and practices from the Muslim world took on new significance and rationale after being removed from their original context. This can be demonstrated by tracing the history of Islamic collections in the Western world. The duration of these variations may be divided into three various periods, each of which has its very own unique pattern. The beginning of the first significant stage coincided with the growth of European imperial power in the nineteenth century. At that time, museums and other institutions all over the globe started putting on exhibit ancient and modern artefacts, documents, and relics. The study of anthropology, archaeology and decorative arts were the three primary categories into which the artefacts were organised (Porter, and Greenwood, 2020). During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rebirth of Islamic art and culture exhibits, as well as a revisionist movement in the field. This took place at a period when colonialism, the effect of oil refining in the Gulf of Mexico, the study of "Islamic art," and new notions about the purpose of galleries were all on the increase. For example, in 1975, the Metropolitan Collection of Art in New York inaugurated what is now widely considered to be the most comprehensive museum of Islamic art in all North America. After another three months, and another year had passed, the World of Islam Festival was held in London. The previous display paradigm was abandoned by the second generation of museums and exhibition venues to differentiate Islamic history from European colonial taxonomies to provide more self-critical interpretation of socio-historical and anthropological knowledge. Since then museums like HSM and PRM adapted the changes and started

displaying Islamic objects separately so that visitors won't get confused between eastern and western culture. (Masteller, 2020).

In addition, this was done to better represent Islamic history, and because of the remarkable rise in the number of museum exhibits dedicated to Islam over the last two decades, this artefact has reached the third stage of importance in its progression. Several new museums and galleries showcase Islamic art and culture, such as the Museum of Islamic Culture in Kazan, Russia and Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art of the Middle East at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. These are just two examples of the many new venues where one can study and appreciate Islamic art and culture. 2011 was the year that saw the renovation of both "Les Galleries des Arts d'Islam" at the Louvre and The Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. In response to this movement, several temporary exhibits and display rooms have been arranged by the "Institut des Cultures d'Islam" (ICI) in Paris and other research organisations with a focus on the Islamic World. In light of this newfound attention, a nonprofit organisation located in London was founded to assist museums and cultural organisations in their investigations of the Muslim past of Britain. No good news can be found about the reasons for this unexpected rise. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has seen a surge in the radicalisation of Muslim extremists and the prevalence of Islamophobes, in addition to the continuation of disputes over identity and integration. Numerous scholars have shown how museums have been used to further the goals of peacekeeping by opposing the spread of misunderstanding about Islam and creating a location where cultural harmony may take place (Porter, and Greenwood, 2020).

During a period in which many nations are experiencing difficulties, there has been a notable increase in the focus placed on the cultural interaction between Islamic and Western

countries, notably in museums located in Europe. This movement is propelled mostly by Muslims who came to the country as immigrants or refugees, with some converts also playing a role. Despite this, there are significant differences between the conventional, non-Muslim manufactured presentations of Islam and the Muslim displays that are on display. Art, artefacts, and traditions that are associated with Islam are often put on display as semaphores (meaning carriers) of the state-sponsored institution that is emphasising the universal significance of these things. However, given that they are examples of "diasporic history," the collections that are kept in museums where the Muslim population makes up the majority are of special significance. Both the word "diaspora" and the idea of a "diasporic legacy" refer to the many ways in which things and cultures might be interpreted by people today. According to Clifford, the aforementioned kinds of organisations do make use of such categories in a variety of worldwide networks.

Their usage makes it easier for people to represent themselves in national cultural settings (such as those in Switzerland, the United States, Australia, and France), supranational cultural contexts, and global cultural contexts (the Islamic World, North Africa, and The Middle East). At the Islamic Museum of Australia, artwork and artefacts serve as both markers of Islamic culture and components of Australian society that foster integration. This creates a palpable connection between a person's home and their cultural place of origin. The "Big Djihad" bronze sculpture by Australian Muslim artist Abdul-Rahman Abdullah portrays two warriors armed and ready for conflict, and it symbolises the artist's struggle with Islam. The two warriors are shown in the artist's struggle with Islam. In addition, the "Bronze, Damascus, and Iznik" line of surfboards that Phillip George creates all have artwork with an Islamic-inspired motif. One of the most recognisable and iconic representations of Australian beach culture seen all over the globe is the surfboard. The museography of the MUCIVI in

Switzerland employs a non-material and non-encyclopaedic approach, which stands in stark contrast to the completely materialised museography of the IMA in the United States. To do this, a set of six sensory chambers are used, each of which is intended to symbolise an important era in the development of Islamic history (i.e., "Ignorance," "Revelations," "Interpretations," "Influence," "Agonies," and "Reinventions"). Olivier Schinz, a museum director and ethnographer, declared in an interview in 2017 that this method tried to seek to steer away from the methodical aestheticisation of Islam proposed by many museums in favour of directing Muslim and non-Muslim visitors on an introverted, non-proselytised trip about Islam as a faith. Schinz claimed that this approach tried to seek to shift away from the structured aestheticisation of Islam proposed by several museums (cited in Masteller, 2020).

The last display hall of the museum is called "Reinventions," and it is dedicated to Muslims living in the modern world in an era of digital, new democratic travels, and internationalisation. This exhibit hall may be where the diasporic theme of the exhibit is most apparent. On the other hand, they have received a widespread commendation from members of the museum world, officials at the state scale, and members of the liberal press. Swiss opponents of the MUCIVI, notably some in the UDC, argue that it is part of a larger cultural drive by conservative Muslims to normalise political Islam in Europe. These critics say that the MUCIVI is part of this larger cultural movement. Professor Yassir Morsi, who is both Australian and Muslim, asserts that the Islamic Museum of Australia depicts Islam in a "whitewashed" and "secularist" way. Morsi is both a citizen of Australia and a member of the Muslim faith. This variance is crucial because it indicates the degree to which national discourse approves of museum interpretations of Islamic history (cited in Masteller, 2020).

2.2.4 Religious Objects and the British Museum

The British Museum is practically full of religious artefacts. There are various religious artefacts in galleries devoted to Asian and Islamic cultures, as well as those dealing with health and healing. Parts of ancient Sumerian, Egyptian, and Greek temples are depicted. Pacific idols, African ancestor masks, Greek and Russian icons, and deity figures are among the items on display. A thorough list would be rather long. Furthermore, whether one searches for religious words on the British Museum's website or the Google Arts and Culture site that is linked to it, there are a number of objects on display. For example, “Faith” appears to be a popular topic among website curators. This fact demonstrates more than just the presence of things with a religious theme. It shows that an ordinarily secular institution is using religion as an interpretative lens. The British Museum now has two additional additions that increase the collection of religious artefacts and religious interpretations (Gonzalez, 2022).

2.3 Religious Objects in Museums with Reference to Islamic Objects

The unique role of teaching the community and conserving the past is carried out by museums. Museum support a greater knowledge of the shared heritage and foster respect for other groups and civilisations by show casing ancient artefacts of different culture. The challenge of impressions and visitor education are essential elements of museum educational endeavours. The British Museum in London, England, is some of the most popular museums around the globe. It has one of the largest collections in the entire globe with over 80,000 pieces on exhibition. The British Museum’s goal is to enthrall and enlighten tourists with its research collections and well-kept display halls. Prior to continuing to examine current challenges, the background of how these personas were created is addressed. This work examines both its

creation and usage in order to tackle the problem of Islam's depiction in museums (Chambers, 2015).

While consumption happens via viewing and the interpretation created by tourists, the manufacturing of depiction and the formation of personality are accomplished in museums by means of tangible display. Research is carried out on museum exhibits of Islamic artefacts in order to examine what collections or objects both the museums (HSM and PRM) have gathered (Black, 2018). This focuses on the customer opinions of present museum exhibits and contains a qualitative component. Furthermore, prior to discussing about the artefacts of HSM and PRM, the researcher is shedding light on four different categories of museums where Islamic art could be viewed so that the readers would know more about Islamic art placed in the British Museum. "The Louvre in Paris, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, and the British Museum in London", the recently combined Berlin Museum, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York are examples of the earliest type of museums that are essentially a universal museum, which was predominantly created by Western cultures. A portion of a typically enormous room is taken up by artworks from Muslim countries, and also the proportion alters depending on purchases, gifts, or other factors. The second kind is the specialty museum, which is likewise primarily prevalent in the West. It might be an "Oriental" or "Asian" art gallery in a broad sense, like that of the "Freer Gallery, the Sackler Museum, and the Museum of the Art of the Citizens of Asia in Washington and Moscow", or it might be a particularly "Islamic" museum, similar to the one that is part of the Academy "du Monde Arabe in Paris or the Leo Mayer Museum in Jerusalem". The museum dedicated to methods, like the "Corning Glass Museum in Corning, New York, or the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.", in addition to the museum affiliated to the "Abegg Foundation in Riggisburg" close to

Basel, is another type of specialty museum with typically large collections of Islamic art (Psomadaki et al., 2019).

There is another coinage museum including the one in New York that is connected to the "American Numismatic Society". A personal museum displaying one person work, typically limited to a method or a concept, ought to belong to this group of specialized museums; there are examples in Beirut and Kuwait. The third sort of monument is the visitor centre, which may be discovered in almost every state on earth and is especially preferred by all new republics. Every state with an Islamic background or with a sizable Muslim population now has a portion of its city museum dedicated to Islamic art. These galleries are designed to represent the heritage of a region. Sometimes even in Cairo or Istanbul, different institutions contain Islamic collections, yet they are all a component of a government-approved chain of historic building organizations. National museums parameter variations partisan and ideological viewpoints on the past or culture, but also their statement frequently necessitates the inclusion of more unconventional art pieces alongside ethnological and archaeological cultural events.

This is the situation also with Top Kapi Seray in Istanbul, where everything except the first of the criteria is evident in the scope and calibre of the collections as well as in the way in which they are presented, in a context of rich history and spectacular placement. Undoubtedly, there are different perspectives from which to view these institutions that have substantial collections of Islamic art. Only because of how that same structure has shaped or, often, perhaps just reflected scholarly and popular perceptions of Islamic art. Given that so much Islamic art comprises pieces made using a wide range of methods and quality levels, museums are forced to make decisions about what to buy, display, or print. However, they are unable to do so because of the very strict hierarchy of categories, methods, and artists created in "post-

Renaissance Western art" (Raimo et al., 2021). Considering the long track record of the gathering and deliberate provocation of Islamic artefacts, neither their depiction nor the people's impressions of these portrayals have been the subject of any comprehensive study (Raimo et al., 2021)

The fundamental data accessible to experts or amateurs is in the hands of museums. They are responsible for catering to the demands of big groups of people, including vacationers and touring academics as well as local school children. They can effectively fulfil this duty by safeguarding their assets, educating visitors about the nuanced aesthetics of Islamic art, and producing their collections accessible to people who can't physically attend them. These objectives aren't always well suited, and a museum's ultimate purpose is to create a balanced relationship between them (Raimo et al., 2021). Both archaeologists and art galleries engage in discussion and talk over the role that museums play in constructing and sustaining ethnic heritage as well as its cultural prejudices through lectures and discussions on different cultures and histories.

It has been widely assumed by one of the researchers, Rey (2019), that the recent increase in public and museum enthusiasm in Islamic art worldwide is directly related to geopolitical needs. Islamic art displays are designed to appeal to both tourists and the numerous Muslim minorities who live in these metropolitan cities, as seen in the dedicated facilities of the "Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia" at the "Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York" and those of the "Arts de l'Islam" at the Louvre. The question of whether Islamic art deserves the designation "Islamic" has been hotly debated over the past few years. Less emphasis has been paid to the second part of the phrase, the designation of these items as "art" (Rey, 2019).

Although literature, documents, biological samples, and antiques made up the majority of the collection's original items, it swiftly expanded to include other historical relics along with "the Rosetta Stone" and "the Parthenon Marbles". Approximately eight million archaeological and historical artefacts are housed in ten distinct administrative and academic divisions at the British Museum nowadays. The varied Islamic world collection is one of the 80,000 items now on show in the British Museum. While the diversified and top-notch holdings of the Islamic world at the British Museum permit the public to discover the historic relevance, depth, and influence of the Islamic world despite the fact that Islamic art spans a broad spectrum of places, times, and categories (Rey, 2019).

2.3.1 Perspectives used by Museums to Exhibit Islamic Artefacts

Since museums have such a significant influence on the ways in which people think and behave, they may utilise the Islamic artefacts that they have in their collections to assist others who struggle to comprehend or accept Muslims. There have been certain museums that have dealt with the events of 9/11 in an open and honest manner. The fact that the "New York Times" gives a lot of attention to the "National September 11 Memorial Museums" is evidence that a large number of people are unable to differentiate between Muslims and those who use Islam as a justification for acts of terrorism. The Muslim community across the globe maintains that terrorists are not Muslims. It is now possible to acquire knowledge about Islam from a viewpoint that is sensitive to its cultural context thanks to initiatives undertaken by museums in the United Kingdom. These initiatives aim to shed light on contentious issues such as Islamophobia (Museum Association 2015). It is critical to carry this out on a massive scale so that individuals might be exposed to new concepts and overcome their anxieties around interactions with other people. People in the UK who are not Muslim have shown a

greater awareness of and appreciation for Islamic art and culture as a result of the "trouble and suffering" in the "Middle East," which includes the destruction in Syria and Iraq (Museum Association 2015). One of the reasons for this is that Islamic art has always been shown with an emphasis on how it appears, rather than with a philosophical or theoretical framework that places the individual works in their appropriate settings. Because of this, the museum exhibits that they inspire often concentrate more on the process of how things are manufactured and how they appear rather than on Islamic religion or culture. The manner in which Islam is often presented in British museums demonstrates that showing Islamic artefacts seldom satisfies the rising demand of the general public to understand more about the history and culture of Muslims. Concerns also exist over the incompatibilities that exist between modernism in the Muslim world and the art history of the West. The art-historical tale suggests that nothing major was created there after 1800. This concept demonstrates how Islamic art, which is a word that was invented by Western academics in the 1800s, clearly has colonial origins. The rise-and-fall idea had a significant role in the process of colonisation. It provided "proof" that Islamic art was deteriorating, which lent credence to the theory that Muslim civilisation was in decline. On the other hand, exhibitions of Islamic art almost seldom, if ever, question this chronology or detail precisely how it was interpreted at that time period. Remarkably, the development of photography in 1839 did nothing to improve the veracity of depictions of the "Orient" in paintings and photographs made by artists, Western military leaders, technocrats, and visitors (Rey, 2019).

2.3.2 Islamic Religious Artefacts

Despite the fact that religious artefacts are not accorded the same level of importance in Islam as they are in other religions, Muslims continue to hold certain things to be sacred.

These things include the Quran, the personal belongings of the Prophet, the Ka'aba, the tower, the Quran stand, the minbar, and the black rock. Calligraphy and concepts, as opposed to anthropomorphic animal forms, are used as ornamental components in Islamic art. Because of this, the concept of aniconism in Islam comprises two distinct ideas: first, the rejection of any and all representations that may potentially be turned into idols (they could portray anything), and second, the condemnation of any and all depictions of real creatures. The core tenet of Islam is that God is the only creator of all things, which has ignited controversy about the role of images in society and the responsibilities of those who produce them. As a result, Islam frowns upon the representation of live beings. The Hadith, also known as "Cultures of the Prophet," is where some of the most severe proclamations about the issue of figural portrayal can be found. These proclamations include a demand that artists "breathe life" into their works and a warning of vengeance on the Day of Judgment. Idolatry is condemned in the Qur'an, and God is described as the "maker of forms" or "artist" using the Arabic term that literally translates to "artist" (Gonzalez, 2022)

This theological stance contributed to the extensive stylization of realistic artworks, and even led to their destruction in certain cases. The Islamic antipathy for figurative representations may be understood in a larger context if one considers the fact that iconoclasm occurred during the time of the Byzantine Empire and that aniconism was widespread in the Jewish world. Figurines, on the other hand, probably required less effort to create given that they had no use other than ornamental one, since Islamic painters were allowed to freely vary and modify fundamental human and animal forms, Islamic art has a large number of figural themes. These motifs may be found throughout the art. Figural subjects may be found in woven or printed textiles, the surface embellishment of objects or structures, and even, very seldom, sculpture. The study of narrative art history, in which literary portrayals served as inspiration

for decorative motifs and themes, is where ornamental imagery got its start and has strong roots to this day. The miniature paintings were not only an essential component of these works, but they also helped to illustrate the text, which made it appropriate for them to be included in the corresponding manuscripts. There was still another group of legendary figures that were capable of being used as designs for ornamental themes. Other fantastical motifs were invented by artists by modifying figural forms in a certain way. Two examples of fantastical themes that were taken from pre-Islamic traditions and repurposed by Islamic painters are the gryphon, which is a winged feline, and the harpy, which is a bird with a female head. Other fantastical motifs were taken from pre-Islamic traditions and repurposed by Islamic painters. These examples were mentioned to exemplify the pre-Islamic tradition, which still visitors see in the museums as ancient artefact of Islam (Gonzalez, 2022).

2.3.3 The Role of Digital Tools and Interpretive Strategies

Museums have an important role in raising public awareness of cultures and history, yet they are frequently chastised for the exhibits they present. This is especially true in the case of Islamic art and culture, which has a rich and varied history that is sometimes oversimplified or reduced to cliches in displays. QR codes and other digital technologies are increasingly being used in this context to help visitors understand the context of artefacts and exhibits. Yet, this technique raises concerns about the role of technology in museum interpretation, and it comes with its own set of challenges and constraints (Cuno, 2019). Researchers and visitors with a significant amount of knowledge about Islamic culture were dissatisfied with the amount of depth shown in the content. Since the labels at the British Museum already have QR codes, but they only lead to the homepage of the museum's website, it was suggested that the digital project team add QR codes to each show that link to more information.

This is in light of the fact that the British Museum labels already have QR codes. People who visited the museum requested further information on the label or an application that would allow them to get additional information (Gökarıksel, 2021). Visitors to the gallery might utilise QR codes to connect to the thorough explanations of each artwork that are already available on the gallery's website. Despite the fact that these descriptions are already available, they are not commonly used (Hanafi, 2020). There were five permanent exhibitions of Islamic attire from various regions of the globe that used to be in Room 43. Now, one can examine garments from both the front and the back thanks to these screens. Since there is only so much room for displays, just a single component of the ensemble may be seen. One in ten respondents to the poll who were given the opportunity to make ideas said that they thought the museum should display the garments from a variety of perspectives. Mirrors were hung up by the team working on the exhibition project so that visitors could examine the garments. The significance of these QR codes is to shed more light on the objects and help the visitors seek more knowledge about the particular Islamic artefact (Bouwhuis, 2019).

There was a great deal of disarray at the core of the exhibition space. One visitor stated that it would make more sense if the centre exhibits were built in chronological order, despite the fact that the gallery project team built the centre exhibits in the order that they are in now. This indicates that people may not be experiencing the gallery in the way that the people who made it wanted them to. At the entrance to the exhibition there is a map of the region that demonstrates how widespread the practise of Islam is. To assist visitors in comprehending the factors that contributed to the expansion of Islam, those working on the exhibition compiled a chronology and a map of the region. However, it is evident that some guests who were acquainted with the culture of Islam were dissatisfied with the way Islam was portrayed via the selection of artefacts (Bouwhuis, 2019).

2.3.4 The Museum and the Religious Dilemma

The belief that genuine religious expression has no place in museums within the larger context of museological inquiry as espoused by ICOFOM has recently been called into question by several critics who have recently taken up the cause (International Committee for Museology), which will serve as a response to this query, is that the open and non-prescriptive ontology of the museum creates an atmosphere that is conducive to the cultivation of sacramentality as well as spirituality in its visitors. Let's begin by examining Duncan's theory (Duncan, 1991). by envisioning a non-believer going to the Church of "San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome" merely out of curiosity to view Caravaggio's artwork. Despite the fact that the artworks communicate their religious message in their ancient Kingdom Christian context, this visitor is undeniably taking part in what may be described as a "secular ritual." On the contrary, regardless of whether or not the viewer is religious, a devout Catholic who sees Velasquez's painting of Christ on the Cross at the Prado Museum in Madrid or a Buddhist who sees the Pensive Bodhisattvas at the National Gallery of Korea in Seoul will interpret the religious imagery as such. These interpretations hold true regardless of whether or not the viewer is religious. As a direct consequence of this, adherents of many faiths perform what is known as "a spiritual rite" inside the context of the nonreligious museum. There are three ramifications to this (Majeed, 2020).

To begin, the way in which the beholder interprets sacredness and secularisation are just as important as the exhibitory space itself. This suggests that the nature of the way in which devotional things are seen does not necessarily need to be pre-set. Having said that, it is abundantly clear that depending on the organisational type of the exhibitory space, be it a religious building, an art centre, or anything else, this sensation possesses a unique cathartic

quality and a varying degree of intensity. This is the case regardless of whether the building in question is a religious building or an art centre. Second, even while it is evident that religious artworks and artefacts lose a substantial amount of importance when they are taken from their original context and put in a museum setting, these items nonetheless possess a powerful and unbreakable force of their own. Third, the enjoyment of decontextualized religious things as sources of spiritual experience might take place in a setting that is unique thanks to the museum's provision of such a setting (Saïd, 2012). This is because of how this institution conceptually and inherently operates, despite the fact that historically it has been used to repress religion in public affairs in the post-Enlightenment setting in which it was created. The reason for this is because of how this institution conceptually and inherently operates (Majeed, 2020).

This terminological issue, on the other hand, is irrelevant within the context of the Muslim community. The promoters and caretakers of galleries and museums in this part of the globe casually designate these establishments as "Islamic," despite the fact that they have substantial artefacts of Islamic indigenous cultures. This is a reflection of the dichotomous academic position that was evoked previously, which has its roots in the twofold antagonistic tendency of perennials versus secularists. Therefore, history not only repeats itself, but it also has more profound ramifications owing to the variety and globalisation of the museological phenomena. The dogma of Western secularism, in all its expressions, currently dominates them, despite the efforts of modern Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and curators who want to lionise the more spiritual ontology of Islamic material culture.

Tilche argued in her article ‘A forgotten Adivasi landscape: Museums and memory in western India’ (Tilche, 2015) that museums can help people connect to either the landscape or historical memory by, “focusing on processes of remembering, forgetting and re-

remembering". She says that what the museum does is show these connections and allow communities to reconnect to their cultures. How museums organise their exhibitions to allow people to make these connections again is relevant for the reader to note as these are the similar types of arguments that the author makes in a different context. This argument is highlighted in the author's data that she collected from her case study of two museums. Tichle's arguments apply to the public role of museums, which includes cataloguing and exhibiting. Both are examples of actions that museums used to help people connect to a particular culture or a memory. That is what Tichle is hoping to advocate for, as she wants to find what makes people, whether Muslim and Non-Muslim audiences, have better connections to the Islamic collection (Tichle, 2015).

2.4 Audience Engagement with Islamic Collections

2.4.1 The Role of Islamic Museums in Audience Participation

Museum volunteers and cultural specialists see Islamic art galleries as a spiritual space where they are able to engage in historical discourse. In order to further the educational and creative aims of the label, Islamic museums also function as organisations and departments that are responsible for the preservation, use, and ongoing exhibition of physical artefacts. An Islamic museum serves the following purposes for travellers from other countries: as a collection, an exhibition, a research centre, an academic institution, and a socially useful meeting place. Since it is aware of the worries and interests of the general public, the Islamic Museum has an art exhibit that produces an immersive engagement with the general public at a certain phase and in a specific group. This is because the museum is aware of the general public's concerns and interests. The efforts of contemporary cultural museums to conserve and promote Islamic history and culture have brought them a lot of attention in recent years. If

cultural relics are not safeguarded, a significant amount of historical and cultural legacy will be lost, and knowledge about previously existing civilizations will be lost as well (Shen, 2014). The staff members of a museum need to have solid professional experience in order to ensure that the environment's humidity, temperature, and light source are all regulated properly. This will ensure that the museum's collections are preserved in perfect condition (Porter, and Greenwood, 2020).

The staff of a museum have to be able to grasp the requirements of the visitors in order to meet those requirements. In order to accomplish this objective, the staff at museums engages in a wide range of activities, including providing visitors with information about the exhibits and interacting with them. In general, museums are establishments that collect, display, and research items of cultural and natural heritage and classify them in accordance with their value to visitors in terms of science, history, or aesthetics. Museums can also be broken down into subtypes based on the types of exhibits they feature (Xu, 2014). They also function as cultural institutions of higher learning that give resources for community interactions and help in learning, teaching, and entertaining people in order to more successfully engage visitors and meet the expectations of the tourists they serve (Xu, 2014). In addition to providing classic, accessible media like text-based materials (such as textual tags and handbooks), museums also offer active and interactive media, including public programmes. Through the utilisation of various mediums, they may develop imaginative displays and engaging environments for visitors to learn about human cultural legacy. Visitors are actively involved in this interpretive information through an introduction, a personalised learning experience, and data in the non-print medium. In the past few years, museums frequently give video, audio or digital interactive material to visitors to allow a variety of connections with artworks (Mairesse, 2019).

The audience may have some complaints about a few different things, one of which is the lack of tangible objects in Museums. The reason for this is that, according to Islamic beliefs, having tangible objects like structures of humans and animals fall into the category of idealism, which is forbidden in the respective religion because Muslims consider it as a sin (Tett, 2020). The presence of music and musical instruments, such as guitars, violins, pianos, and other similar instruments, is one of the additional items that may be found in the requirements of non-Muslim guests (Basit, 2015).

2.5 Museum Efforts

2.5.1 Various Tactics Deployed By Museums to Promote Public Interaction with Collections

Conducting an evaluation is the very first thing that has to be done in order to figure out how people utilise the exhibit. According to the findings and the analysis of relevant literature by Äikäs (2019), modifications that have been made to the Islamic gallery's facilities, layout, and content have resulted in an increase in client demand, although without significantly altering the gallery's exhibitions.

2.5.2 Facilities

Visitors to the Albukhary Foundation Gallery, which is one of the Islamic museums, are often worn out and seeking for a place to relax since the gallery is located in a different nation and is separated from the "Great Court" and the café on the upper level, both of which offer places to sit. According to the results of the survey, sixteen percent of the visitors who participated in the discussion said that the subject matter on display at the gallery might be more intriguing. They were so worn out that they could only remain for a tour of the museum, so they requested that the Albukhary Foundation Gallery have more seats from the institution.

There are just five chairs available throughout the museum, and they are often completely used. Unfortunately, there are no additional seats that visitors may fold up, and there are only five seats overall. However, if there were a greater number of spaces for people to sit, they could be more inclined to remain in the gallery. They are now engaged in the process of working on it (Petrov, 2019).

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Islamic art and culture have recently been featured in museum renovations around the world, and Britain now has its first ever Islamic gallery. However, as Muslims continue to hold some artifacts in high regard, the presentation of religious relics in British museums raises problems regarding the perspective used to portray these Islamic antiquities. Instead of using anthropomorphic animal shapes for decoration, Islamic art relies on calligraphy and ideas. For visitors to fully grasp the value of these objects, museums must give background information and essays that translate artifact-based literature. The value of Islamic museums in facilitating audience engagement with Islamic collections cannot be overstated. Finally, museums have made great efforts to attract visitors by displaying Islamic sacred objects, employing a wide range of interpretative methodologies and digital resources to educate the public and encourage participation. Museums may help spread a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of Islamic art and culture by continuing to address these issues and opportunities.

Chapter III: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This methodology explains the methods of data collection adopted at address the research question, "What is the relationship between Islamic collections and their audiences?" This project uses case studies of two UK museums, the History of Science Museum (HSM) and the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM), which both have Islamic objects and collections, and it studies how audiences interact with them. This chapter will provide background information about the two case studies used (the Pitt Rivers Museum and History of Science Museum), the method used to collect data from both museums, the method for analysing the data, and provide a brief conclusion.

3.2 Case Studies and Mixed Methodologies

The approach used in this research is "mixed methods": using both qualitative and quantitative data about two case studies. Case studies represent a great deal of research in the fields of psychology, history, education, and medicine (Starman 2013). Much of what is known about the observed world today is provided through case studies, and many of the most significant insights in every discipline are derived from case study research. Case studies are widely used in sociology and are considered particularly important in placement areas such as education, management, policy practice, and social work – and in Museum Studies. However, as the creators of the *Case Studies Encyclopedia* (Mills et al. 2010) point out, there is no single all-encompassing reference to design and strategy in case studies. Moreover, they find, "most research strategies either ignore case studies or confuse them with a different type of social

research." From this, one can deduce that despite their widespread use and popularity, case studies still have uncertainties and irregularities in decision-making (de Vries, 2020). Most often, case studies are considered to be a kind of qualitative research approach and technique. While this may be the case, they can be equally quantitative or involve a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Gammelgaard 2017).

The descriptive worldview used to represent qualitative research places a focus on the significance of affecting experiences for human beings (Busetto, 2020). In this way, a researcher's exciting perspective on a particular situation has a fundamental influence on the findings. Another feature of qualitative research is that it provides an intelligible context, process, relationship, etc. In qualitative studies, researchers take a unique tack by emphasising a singular perspective on underlying interpretative ideologies, phenomenological methods, and constructivism, the paradigmatic premises of qualitative research, are closely linked to the definitions and characteristics of case studies. Thus, a case study is more qualitative than quantitative, and where quantitative data is collected it is in support of the former. Qualitative and quantitative results should complement each other to form an important whole based on the elements and motivations behind the exam (Patton 2005). Both Qualitative and Quantitative studies are interpretive, qualitative studies are founded on a characterisation of human experience and an interpretative approach to social reality. Researchers in quantitative fields draw freely from this foundation of meaning appreciation; they do not create techniques that elucidate it. As a result, the quantitative analysis relies on interpretation. Researchers who conduct interpretive case studies can easily draw from a fundamental, intelligent view of the wider social and political world that has shaped the case (Merriam 1998).

3.3 Reason for Selecting a Case Study Approach with a Mixed Methodology

Here, the mixed methodology approach is used to uncover different facets and a more comprehensive understanding of the two case studies. Furthermore, this section would discuss the research questions. Firstly, it'd be easier to understand the comparison between these two museums more efficiently by taking people's opinions and interviews. It was only possible for a researcher to do by taking mixed methodology to have a better understanding as qualitative approach would tell about the existing information about these two museums and quantitative approach is going to help in understanding the point of view of others regarding the two museums in order to have a complete knowledge. However, the purpose of using the case study in this research is to make a better comparison between the History of Science Museum and the Pitt River Museum. Nevertheless, primary research entails the collection of un-gathered information that wasn't used before. It might be gathered by interviews, questionnaires, observations, or any other sort of independent study (Bhambri, 2020). Here, the purpose of using primary research is to get the personal opinions of visitors and staff members to get a better understanding of both museums. The secondary research gathered, allows a researcher to make use of data already collected by another and avoid unnecessary duplication. So, secondary research has been used to compare the findings with existing data available on the internet about HSM and PRM to develop a better understanding and comparison of the two museums.

The reason for using this kind of method was because it allowed the author to obtain a significant amount of data that could be analysed in the discussion chapter. The author chose to use mixed methods because this permitted the author to conduct visitor surveys, questionnaires for the staff and staff interviews. However, the purpose of using different approaches for staff and visitors is that visitors will only tell about the observable factors which they would notice in museums whereas staff workers can tell internal information about both

museums that other people or visitors would not know and researchers didn’t find that information even in the literature.

3.4 History of Science Museum (HSM)

The "Old Ashmolean" is a quality historic building. Its primary intent in 1683 was to accommodate gatherings of rare items and mysteries and was thus recognised as the "Museum Ashmoleanum". This was the world's first museum to introduce itself to the general public. Furthermore, being a museum, the Old Ashmolean accommodated the "School of Natural History " on the middle floor and the "first chemical laboratory " in England on the ground floor. The "Old Ashmolean Building" in Broad Street, which housed university offices, gained its name after the Ashmolean Museum's 1899 opening, which took place behind the University Galleries. When the "Lewis Evans collection of scientific instruments' ', which had just been given to the university, was allocated to the Old Ashmolean's top floor in 1924, the building started to function once again as a museum and then the "Museum for the History of Science " was created in this structure by legislation in 1935. There are 24 volunteers and 60 employees from 2016 to 2019 in HSM. The HSM has three levels and each level holds a gallery. HSM has 35000 objects of early astronomical and mathematical instruments from Europe and the Islamic World (especially astrolabes and sundials). Only 20% of these are displayed in the museum’s three galleries (The Entrance, Top and Basement Galleries) (Reeve, 2018). The History of Science Museum, the very first purposely built museum structure in history, was accessible to the general public from the beginning. The new view of nature that arose in the 17th century was to be institutionalised as the main goal of the History of Science Museum. Organic philosophy research was carried out in a chemistry laboratory on the middle floor, and presentations and demonstrations were held in the College of Natural History on the "middle

floor" (Cameron, 2005). Ashmole's gatherings were enlarged to include a wide range of pursuits connected to the antiquity of natural knowledge. In 1924, Lewis Evans' collection was donated, enabling the museum to advance and change its name to the "Museum of the History of Science". Robert Gunther was appointed as the gallery's first creative director. Scientist Robert Gunther worked on the display of collections of the "History of Science Museum". Dr. Gunther constantly showed the Museum little acts of assistance. For instance, Gunther once donated a lot of money for the library's conservation programs, enabling an upgrade to the materials used to store its records and paintings (Collins, 2022).

The collection as well as the museum itself currently have a unique place in the history of scientific research. For example, Einstein's Blackboard, which he used on May 16, 1931, while educating students at Oxford University is among the most famous items in the museum. It was saved by dons like "E. J. Bowen and Gavin de Beer". Almost all elements of the history of science are represented in the collection's approximately 18,000 artefacts, which date from prehistory to the early 20th century and are utilised for both academic research and public viewing (Merriman, 2002). The museum houses a wide variety of scientific apparatuses, including astrolabes (the most comprehensive collection in the world with approximately 170 instruments), sundials, quadrants, early mathematical apparatuses (used for calculations, astronomy, route planning, inspecting, and drawing), optical apparatuses (magnifying glasses, Hubble space telescope, and cameras), apparatuses related to chemical properties, natural science, and medicine, as well as a reference library on the history of scientific apparatuses. The museum has a lot more collections including the evolution of mechanical clocks. The Beeson Room, so-called in honour of the "antiquarian horologist Cyril Beeson (1889-1975)", who donated his treasure to the museum, has a display of long case clocks and lantern clocks. Above the steps leading from the basement to the higher ground level are antique turret clocks

on display. The museum is home to a collection of "Lady Gertrude Crawford's turned ivory" and other creations. The collection also includes astrolabes among its many unusual equipment. The greatest collections of astrolabes in the planet is housed in "the History of Science Museum" One of the collection's centrepieces is a sizable "parabolic transmitter and receiver system" that Marconi used to show the British Army the latest wireless connectivity in 1896. .HSM gathered and conserved artefacts and documents of cultural, religious, and historical significance. They provide enjoyable amusement. The museum served as a repository for antiquated artefacts, sculptures, items, history, etc. while also preserving and promoting the cultural legacy. (Jagodzińska and Tutak, 2020).

Significantly, HSM is the custodian of the largest collection of Islamic astronomy instruments in the world. These scientific items, which date from the 800s CE to the present, were made and utilised by individuals who lived in countries where Islam was the dominant religion (Komaroff, 2000). The region people now refer to as the Muslim majority, or Islamic World has shifted considerably throughout time. Spain, for instance, was a part of it from 711 to 1492 CE, Even though the craftsmen who crafted them came from all over the world, including Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, the products themselves yet have many common, distinctive characteristics. (Warrior, 2003). The instrument manufacturers were not all Muslims, (despite the fact that they all lived and worked in the Islamic world) but the instrument presented in the museum tells about the collection’s relation with Islam. The end result is an amazing collection that is both rich and diverse. Consequently, visitors to HSM may see some Islamic artefacts in the Middle Gallery, but more are on exhibit at the Top Gallery in the Islamic world display (Carrier, 2003). This latter collection includes 20–25 Islamic artefacts, including sundials, celestial spheres, Qibla indicators, and astrolabe quadrants. The History of Science Museum also includes one of the greatest collections of

ancient microscopes, going back to immediately after the invention of the microscope in the 17th century. The Royal Microscopical Society has given the Museum various microscopes, some of which date back to the nineteenth century. Furthermore, numerous early navigational instruments, such as "octants and sextants, surveying equipment, and drawing tools" used by engineers and architects from the 16th through the 20th centuries can be seen in mathematical collections.



Figure 1: History of Science Museum (HSM) the building from the outside and the Islamic display at the Top Gallery

3.5 Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM)

Located in the heart of Oxford on South Parks Road, the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) is a one-of-a-kind typological museum that was established in 1881. It is highly known for its vast research and contributions to the field of museums in general, in addition to the many anthropological and archaeological collections that it houses (Ken, 2022). Although it can store a total of 600,000 pieces, only 55,000 artefacts are now on exhibit. Over 430,000 people visit the museums every year, including 30,000 kids who are able to benefit from the huge amounts of information that are on show. The employees of PRM are responsible for the education of nearly 2500 pupils each year, and there are a total of 68 staff members. In addition, there is a volunteer programme that often has around twenty individuals working together at the same

time. There are 1.2 million internet visitors coming from 99 different countries each month to the PRM website. The museum has an Islamic collection, however it is difficult to locate on their web database. Additionally, the museum retains an undetermined amount of items in storage and only a small number of items are shown due to the fact that the Pit Rivers Museum only has a small number of collections. Thomas Manly Deane and Benjamin Woodward, the same individuals who had built the first building to house the Oxford University Museum of Natural History thirty years previously, established the Pitt Rivers Museum with the intention of storing the collection that belonged to Pitt Rivers. 1885 marked the beginning of construction, while 1886 was the year in which it was finally completed. In 1884, General Augustus Pitt Rivers, a soldier and archaeologist who was fascinated with cultural objects and had a significant influence on the development of advanced archaeology through his discovery of a classification scheme for such artefacts recognised as typography, constructed the museum (Vider, 2021). In 1884, Pitt Rivers parted ways with his collection of 27,000 items and offered them to Oxford University in return for Oxford paying for a full-time anthropology lecturer. Since it includes a teaching and research facility as well as curators who are all University of Oxford scholars with expertise in either cultural studies or historical archaeology, The Pitt Rivers is intrinsically linked to the work that is done at the University of Oxford (Van Broekhoven, 2018).

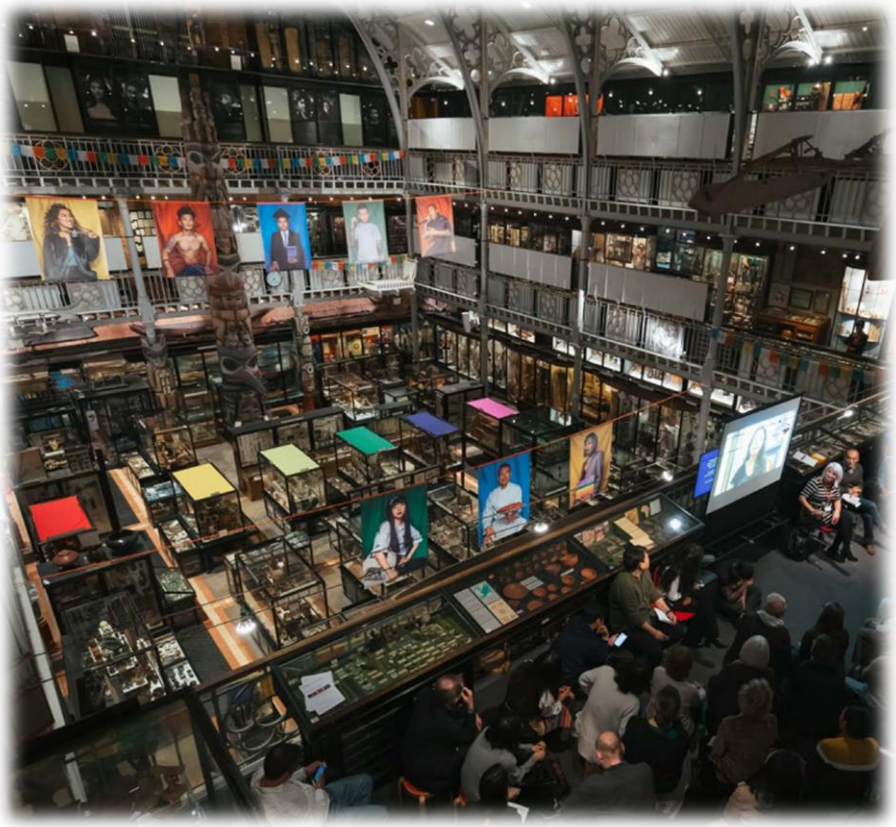


Figure 2: PRM inside View

The amount of glass cases exhibits beneath with the tourists' top glass, and the tourists may open the drawers to discover them with the preservation of aircraft. A few of the aircraft have labels that are readable and belong to the museum, whereas others do not. Thus the objects cannot be removed by handling, imagining the facilities and non-visual exploration. In this process the discovery of the projects can be performed actively, suggesting the articles and some are not of their particular interest. The museum experiences the enhanced potential that encounters the possibility of surprising, pleasing and reassuring such articles that have to submit (Dudley, 2014).

PRM's basic tenet is that nonreligious topics, such as magic and Islamic artefacts, are given equal weight to religious ones. Islamic artefacts are often used as part of themed activities, such as those involving textiles, science, and patterns. (Lightman, 2019).

The research also discussed efforts by the museum to address the challenges they face with regards to their Islamic collections. The author introduces these here.

3.6 Engaging new audiences and learning as teams: The Curate Project, Young Producers and Multaka Project

While doing this study, the researcher was also working on the Islamic collections-related "Multaka" project, which had previously been used in the "Science in Islam" exhibition at the museum (Morentin and Guisasola, 2015).

The word "Multaka" means "meeting spot" in Arabic, which is crucial in suggesting that the museums are integrating their expertise with the surrounding Muslim populations. The aim or purpose of using the Multaka project is to instruct refugees from Syria and Iraq on the skills necessary to operate as museum guides so that these refugees will be better able to provide guided museum tours to other refugees who are fluent in Arabic. "Asylum Welcome, Connection Support Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, and Refugee Resource" are the local organisations that collaborate to implement this programme (Ken, 2022). The employees and volunteers of Multaka are working together with two museums: the History of Science Museum, which possesses Islamic scientific equipment, and the Pitt Rivers Museum, which was recently given a gift of textiles from the Arab World by "Jenny Balfour Paul" (Petch, 2007). They are doing research, learning new information, and getting new insights on the collections together, this was done by the refugees who got trained and then provided guidance to the visitors Multaka makes use of the two university museums and their collections as a central location for community meetings, with the goal of promoting mutual comprehension

via the sharing of works of art, stories, cultural practises, and scientific information (Larson et al., 2007).

To provide a forum for intercultural discourse, the team collaborates with the neighbourhood community, employees, and volunteers on a three-way basis delivered by Oxford's History of Science Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum. Through the "Young Producers" initiative and the "Multaka Collaboration," a collaborative project between PRM and HSM that began in 2018, the growth of staff involvement with the Islamic collections was also emphasised (Borun et al., 1995).

The ‘Young Producers’ were planning a display about Islam at the time of this interview, which has now taken place at the Top gallery within HSM, bringing in a further perspective of Islam into the museums. This is one way the Islamic collections have been highlighted; however, this opens a whole new narrative when approaching the HSM Islamic collections. In terms of her recommendations going forward with the Islamic collections, the most important thing is to keep an open mind, being aware that what the museum is doing at the moment is nowhere near what it should be and it needs to remain being open to criticism (Scotland and Toonen, 2020).

The ‘CURATE project’ is a public consultation event that collects feedback from visitors about the interpretation of the Islamic collections. ‘Young Producers’ have focused on enhancing the Islamic collections in HSM for the past year and a half (2018-19). In addition to all these activities, the staff also mentioned that the museum occasionally hosts lectures on Islamic collections for both the public and school trips. These activities happen regularly with the most regular activities being the ‘CURATE project’, the ‘Young producers’ and the medieval medicine board games. The school trips are also frequent; however, they are set up on request by the schools and are less regular.

3.7 Data Collection

The author started to study the Islamic collections in each museum by accessing the documentation on the publicly available museum databases as well as the staff-only databases with permission from the museums' Directors. The author dedicated over a month to each museum, looking thoroughly at the museum displays in person and exploring their online databases and this work informed her writing of the Long Visitor Survey. The author designed two types of visitor surveys, one of which was to be used as the visitor is going around three levels of each museum (the Long Survey) and the other to be filled out five minutes before they leave each museum (Exit Survey). The author used the same surveys for each museum, apart from the object-specific questions. The author divided the Long Survey into five parts A, B, C, D and E, and each part had three or four questions. Part A was about their overall prior experience of Islam before their visit and the second part B asked them to identify Islamic objects in the gallery during their visit. Part C asked the visitors five questions to identify how they would classify specific Islamic Objects on display in the gallery. Part D was the most in-depth section because the visitors were asked to answer nine questions related to their interaction with Islamic objects and the last part E contained the visitor profile. The visitor profile included seven tick boxes to categorise the people who had done the survey and to enable the author to gain more information about the visitors to each museum. Please refer to the Appendix for both surveys.

These visitor surveys ran for two months in total (one month in each museum), with data being collected on one day of each week over four weeks in each museum. The author decided to survey on a weekday, at the weekend and twice during the half-term school holiday to have mixed audiences replying such as individuals, couples or families. The author would

spend around four hours each session collecting data from visitors. At the top of each survey paper, the author had written a short statement on the survey sheet introducing herself, the research title, and the aim of this survey. Part A of the Long Survey on entry to each museum was designed to find out the visitors' prior knowledge in terms of Islam as a religion, Islamic objects, and cultural objects before starting their visit. Some of the visitors agreed to fill out parts B, C, D and E of the rest of the Long Survey form during their visit. Finally, some visitors agreed to fill out the separate Exit Survey at the table in the author's presence. The author invited the visitors to complete both surveys and encouraged them to finish them. However, since some visitors only partially completed the long survey, the author decide to still consider the data on these surveys. In contrast, all the exit surveys were agreed upon by the visitors, and they were fully completed because the author was waiting to collect the form in five minutes. To make it easy for the visitors to fill in the forms the author provided them with pencils and wooden boards to lean on.

The author printed out 50 hard copies of each survey to hand out gradually each time she was in. She was interested to find that in the History of Science Museum visitors fully completed 34 surveys leaving 39 forms uncompleted or only half-completed because of different reasons for example the language barrier, not enough time, and the demands of a family with small children or simply not interested. However, in the Pitt Rivers Museum, 30 forms were fully completed and a further 30 were uncompleted or only half completed due to the same reasons. After completing the surveys, some visitors asked the author follow-up questions, which is relevant as this means they showed interest in the topic. Some visitors started sharing old memories from their visits to Islamic countries and from experiences they had through visiting other museums in the UK and elsewhere, and this gave the author the indication that people were enjoying the topic.

The author wanted to reach another type of audience, those insides and working behind the scenes in both museums, to allow them to share their thoughts and points of view on the Islamic collections in their museum. Turning to the staff questionnaires, initially, the author contacted the museum directors in each museum for permission to conduct them. It was a bit easier to approach the directors in person or via work email because the author was already working there. However, the author still needed to follow the standard museum rules relating to external researchers. Each director has its policy to introduce the author in her role as an external researcher to their staff. The author then arranged some meetings with relevant staff to go through some of the questions on the draft questionnaires and later share with them the final version of the questionnaires. The two museums sent an email to all their staff to introduce the author as a researcher, and what the research work was about and included the author's electronic survey link for the staff to follow as part of the body of the introduction email. As the author was working at HSM it was easier to remind the staff to do so, however in PRM the author asked if they could send a reminder for their staff to do the online questionnaires.

For the staff questionnaire, the author used the Lime Survey programme which was not expensive to use and recommended by the University of Birmingham and by other students. This survey has three sections, A - C, with five questions in each section. These questions are a mixture of multiple-choice and write-in comments. The questionnaire was sent out to all staff in PRM and HSM and they were given one month to complete it. At the end of the questionnaire, staff were given an option to choose to be interviewed for a further discussion of their views on Islamic collections in their respective museums. The questionnaire was authorised by the Directors of the museums and was sent out via the Directors on behalf of the author. The total response from HSM staff was 32 questionnaires, 21 complete surveys and 11 incompletes. The total response from PRM staff was 18 questionnaires, with 16 complete

surveys and 2 incompletes. During the month-long period, the author sent out reminders to both museum staff groups to complete the survey if they could. However, there were some barriers during the questionnaire period due to the University's Christmas holidays, so the author extended the deadline to get the maximum possible responses. Most people showed an interest in being interviewed; however, the author wanted to choose staff from different departments to have a wider range of perspectives to discuss and analyse.

The questions in the Staff Questionnaire were designed to help answer the main research question for this dissertation. First, the questionnaire asked for the staff member's name, job title and educational background (Section A), followed by several sections (sections B and C) specifically related to the Islamic collections in the museum where they worked. All questions in sections B and C were open-ended to allow the staff to answer freely, writing as much as they wanted. This data provided the author with rich information about the staff, their knowledge of Islam as a religion and the Islamic collections. The author noticed that some staff gave unexpectedly short replies, which she would not have expected based on their job titles, the reverse was also true, in general, she also noticed that previous colleagues in HSM tended to give fuller responses.

The author interviewed thirteen staff members in each museum, twenty-six in total. These staff members included the Directors, members of the Education department, Conservators, Front of House staff, members of the Education and Outreach departments, members of the Public Engagement departments, and Curators. After positive responses from staff from both museums, the author arranged appointments for interviews. These interviews were recorded, with permission, so the author could use the recordings to transcribe and further analyse the interview. It took the author around two to three months to arrange and follow through with the interviews. This was because the interviews were always one hour long and

she had to fit around the staff schedules. Due to the author's work schedule in these two museums, it made it easier to book private rooms to host the interviews and provide confidentiality. The author also provided follow-up questionnaires following the interviews to expand upon the interview with ideas that may not necessarily have been discussed at the time.

During the interviews, the author noticed that people felt freer and more comfortable engaging with the questions, as it was a two-way conversation that encouraged more of a relaxed environment within which to expand their answers. It was also a tactic which enabled the author to challenge the answers to gain more of an understanding of their general stance. While the author offered the Long and the Exit surveys to the visitors which has already been discussed above, in contrast, the author conducted the research on the staff using a completely differently worded Staff Questionnaire followed up with one-hour interviews with selected staff. The author decided to use the Visitor Surveys and the Staff Questionnaire to focus on two different audiences for the Islamic collections, those coming from outside as visitors and those inside working as staff. The author wanted to find the similarities and the differences between these two audiences through quantitative data which was collected via tick boxes followed up with boxes for free writing.

The author worded the Staff Questionnaire to encourage them to reflect on what they had done individually to identify objects in the Islamic collection in their museum as part of their work, what they thought about their displays, whether the Islamic collections were accessible or not for their audiences from their experience in different roles in the museums, and what they thought about the level of public engagement in each museum. In addition, the author particularly wanted to ask staff whether they could distinguish between religious and non-religious items within the Islamic collections based on their knowledge, plus she wanted to ask staff their opinions about the different temporary activities happening in both museums,

such as school visits to the museums and outreach visits. The author asked a question related to Islamophobia at the end of each interview with the staff to ask their opinion about whether they feel the museum could be a platform to discuss this matter using their Islamic collections. This was and continues to be a very important issue in British communities, however, it is also a very sensitive topic to discuss for both parties.

3.7.1 Process of Interviewing in the museums

The author interviewed thirteen staff members in each museum, twenty-six in total. These staff members included the Directors, members of the Education department, Conservators, Front of House staff, members of the Education and Outreach departments, members of the Public Engagement departments, and Curators. After positive responses from staff from both museums, the author arranged appointments for interviews. These interviews were recorded, with permission, so the author could use the recordings to transcribe and further analyse the interview. It took the author around two to three months to arrange and follow through with the interviews. This was because the interviews were always one hour long and she had to fit around the staff schedules. Due to the author's work schedule in these two museums, it made it easier to book private rooms to host the interviews and provide confidentiality. The author also provided follow-up questionnaires following the interviews to expand upon the interview with ideas that may not necessarily have been discussed at the time. During the interviews, the author noticed that people felt freer and more comfortable engaging with the questions, as it was a two-way conversation that encouraged more of a relaxed environment within which to expand their answers. It was also a tactic which enabled the author to challenge the answers in order to gain more of an understanding of their general stance. In this research 50 people at all levels in both museums and in all roles from the Director to FOH

responded to the author's staff questionnaire 26 of that number agreed to take part in face-to-face interviews. The author's discussions with the staff revealed a knowledge gap around the original stories and background context of the Islamic collections.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This research has been conducted following all the ethical requirements from the University of Birmingham as laid out in the author's Application for Ethical Review form, this form was completed and submitted in 2017 to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer. The research was approved in June 2017, with the reference ERN_17-1440. Please see the appendix for details. The form itself contains 23 points to complete and took the author around one month to fill out and then a further month to receive approval from the university. The data collection process, via the surveys, questionnaires and interviews took place after the author obtained prior permission from the university teachers, professors, and museum professionals involved. Moreover, the museum professionals were also asked for prior permission so that they could provide appropriate information related to the artefacts from Islamic collections to the author. When the author was designing the Visitor Surveys and then the Staff Questionnaires, she took into consideration their need for their identity to be kept private and confidential. Once the surveys and questionnaires had been completed, the author chose to store the participants' profiles on the original paper copies in her office at home for security, where nobody else could access them. In addition, all the confidential information will be destroyed at the end of the research work. The author managed to see both the staff and public online cataloguing for both those museums, to better understand how the past and present Collection Managers documented the Islamic collections in each museum in the absence of specialist Islamic Collection Curators.

Before the 11th September 2001 terrorist attacks, the author was not aware of Islamophobia. Following the invasion at the start of the Iraqi war in March 2003, the author immigrated to the UK from Iraq via Malaysia and at that point, she started to become aware of this concept. Working in UK museums for over 16 years inspired the author to highlight this issue in her research work because of the comparative lack of cultural knowledge and deep understanding of the Islamic collections and of Islam itself as a religion. The author is a British citizen who has been working in British museums since 2006. The author is also an Arab-Iraqi Muslim woman wearing a headscarf called the Hijab which is normally worn by Muslim women, so she is visibly Muslim. Therefore, that alone may influence how people talk to her, so that visitors and staff may talk to her about Islam quite differently from how they may talk to a not visibly Muslim woman. Some of the assumptions that they might make are that the research topic and the outcomes of the research are important to the author, which means that when they talk to her, they may not tell her things which they fear might offend her as a practising Muslim. There is a clear ethical dilemma for the author when analysing the responses to the staff questionnaire and conducting the staff interviews because she works with and knows the museum staff. There is also potential for the visitors to either consciously or unconsciously try to please the author or to self-censor while completing the visitor's survey.

Although the ethical form wasn't shown to the staff directly it was understood that the ethical form had been completed and approved because the author was doing the research work as part of her MA with the University of Birmingham which is a UK university and legally has to follow this procedure for all postgraduate students approaching members of public for data. The author wanted the visitors and staff to feel free to provide their opinions and recommendations and also wanted to reassure them that their data would be kept safe. Find samples of the visitor surveys in the appendix. To ensure that the author's personal and

professional views did not influence the responses given by visitors and staff she didn't share her personal opinions. First, when conducting the visitor surveys, she spoke only to welcome each visitor and explain the survey paper and formally document the consent given by the visitors who wanted to take part in this research. The author found that keeping her opinion private was easier with visitors because she did not know them either personally or professionally.

Similarly, the staff questionnaires were sent via email, not in person, so the author's opinion was invisible. In contrast, in the staff interviews, which were conducted by the author herself, the author used their written responses as a basis for further discussion and purely focused on encouraging them to expand on their written answers, making sure to stay neutral. The author was aware of having strong feelings about labelling, and because of this, she made sure to not discuss this point with staff during the research interviews. She wanted visitors and staff to offer their opinions and ideas freely about the layout of each museum in terms of the Islamic objects. The author didn't want to focus on the accuracy of the labelling, but instead on the communication around these objects and on understanding how visitors and staff respond to the Islamic objects.

The case study relied primarily on observations taken from questionnaire responses and interviews. The author spent four months interviewing and taking questionnaires from staff and visitors. After each interview, the interviewee's responses were compared to other interviewees' questionnaire responses. Once all the questionnaires were received, the author processed the data and compared results between staff in HSM and PRM, as well as staff questionnaire responses against visitor responses. Visitor responses from HSM and PRM were also compared against each other. The directors from each museum were identified by the

author as key informants and were both interviewed individually. Their interviews both followed the same structure and questions to facilitate comparison and reliability.

3.9 Conclusion

To summarise, to answer the research question, which is to examine the relationship between Islamic collections and their audiences, the author decided on two case studies, the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) and the History of Science Museum (HSM) both in Oxford. From the case study descriptions, the author has identified the histories of both museums, as well as the choices behind their displays, and outlined their collections of different Islamic objects. However, by using mixed methodology, it was easier for the author to compare both museums, the author cleared the internal information of both museums which was gathered by interviewing the staff members and the external information of both museums through surveys. There are mainly three main variables in each museum such as staff, visitors as well as the collection of the Islamic arts. The author has compiled information on the history of both the Science Museum and the Pitts River Museum, as well as the decisions that led to the formation of each institution's collections and a variety of Islamic artefacts. The author designed the staff questionnaires and the visitor surveys so they could be used in both museums, however, part of each visitor survey was specifically worded to suit each museum's layout and collections.

The author particularly wanted to conduct staff interviews as part of the qualitative research to encourage staff who are working at each museum to share their experience related to the museum collections and more specifically with the Islamic collections. The author wished to enrich this research by collecting data from both staffs in their role as insider audiences arising from their work with the Islamic collections in different positions and from visitors in their role as outsider audiences, who have less specialised and a more unpredictable range of knowledge

about Islamic collections. Using the mixed method technique in 2018-19, the author will be able to compare as well as contrast the findings from the two museums to gain a better understanding of the relationship between museums and their audience with reference to Islamic collections.

Chapter IV: Findings

In order to answer the research question of how to make Islamic Collections more accessible to audiences in UK museums, the author performed a case study of two museums in the University of Oxford: the History of Science Museum (HSM) and the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM). The author will analyse the results of the research questionnaires and interviews in the Findings chapter and interpret these results in conjunction with the background issues and literature discussed previous chapters in the Discussion Chapter that follows.

The Findings section will be divided into several sections that will analyse a variety of staff interviews and questionnaires and visitor surveys.

The raw data and quantitative data from the research carried out is presented in the appendix. There are two main aspirations of the HSM and PRM museums when it comes to their role as communicators. Firstly, they aim to express the thoughts and concepts of the cultures which their objects represent, and secondly, they also aim to represent the variety of visitors and their cultures within the UK through their galleries. A narrative of the data are offered in two parts first from the staff interviews and staff questionnaires (section 4.1) and then the visitor surveys (4.2). The significance the data are then highlighted (section 4.3).

4.1 Comparison of the Museums through Interviews and Staff Questionnaires

The general theme for PRM is that there is no particular focus on religions in the responses to the research surveys, but rather there is a focus on specific topics, for example “Magic” and “Islamic objects”. Other themed activities in which Islamic objects are used are textile activities, scientific instruments and patterns. PRM staff and visitors were much less aware of Islamic activities, with the exceptions of a few special programs such as the ‘The

Syrian Outreach programme'. Following on from this there is not much positive feedback about the regularity of such activities with an overwhelming majority being unaware of such activities.

4.1.1 Data Based on Interview

During the interview with the author, one of the Education Officers at HSM mentions "astrolabe making workshops for secondary and primary groups" which do not occur on a regular basis, only according to the booking of the groups. The Research Facilitator at HSM "seems to have further insight into a wider range of activities including Curate, board games, Medieval Medicine, Young Producers and school activities with astrolabes." HSM staff find that there are activities available, however not all on a regular basis. PRM staff are, however, much less aware of activities such as these. Again, this was because of the typological display, so it is less likely to have activities based only on Islamic Collections. However there have been some, but not regular, activities held in PRM connected to Islamic objects. A Senior Gallery Assistant at PRM mentions the Syrian Refugee Outreach Programme, which was in his opinion "a bad concept". No other staff member mentioned this programme and they describe it as "a MASSIVELY wasted opportunity". The author thus recommends all staff are kept up to date with museum activities related to the Islamic collections. This could be achieved via clear communication between the curators and the rest of the staff.

The PRM director suggested making the collections more accessible by encouraging visitors to use the online catalogue on the Pitt Rivers Museum website, as well as encouraging them to download the catalogue on their phones. These are two activities which could assist both visitors and staff in understanding more about the background to the Islamic objects and could prevent them from overlooking crucial differences between different cultures, and in

particular between different cultures within the Islamic world. On request, visitors can delve deeper into the archives in the museum to learn further. Moreover, there has been an app developed called ‘Self curatorial tools’ as well as audio guides which can be used during the visits. There are very many objects displayed in PRM, making it very difficult to have a lot of information on every object: hence, staff propose using digital tools along with the display cards to deliver the preferred level of information.

4.1.2 Categorization for Museum Interpretation of Islamic Collections

In terms of categorisation and archiving, staff were asked their opinion related to the knowledge professionals should have about the Islamic objects when curating them and what general knowledge of Islamic collections and what specific knowledge they should have regarding the sensitive items. Most staff members agreed that there needs to be more than ‘a basic understanding’ of Islamic objects and collections when curating them. This is because there would be a clearer understanding of how the Islamic collection fits in with the rest of the museum and so that no important details would be overlooked which would affect the interactivity of the display. The types of display and interpretation of the objects along with their presentation and labelling are essential to the correct understanding of the real meaning of Islam and Islamic objects. All age groups of visitors, see tables E and F in the appendix, must be considered, as not all of them currently show an interest in the museums and Islamic objects; therefore, the categorisation needs to be done in an accurate but understandable way for all age groups.

It is a common idea that staff should have some sort of knowledge of the Islamic objects to present the right information to the visitors who do not know anything about the religion, however, some staff members stated that ‘excellent knowledge’ and understanding of the

Islamic collections would be ideal. Many staff members stated that if the museum is laid out in the most attractive manner and objects are re-categorized to enhance interpretation the objects could be represented in a very different and interactive manner. There are several cultures and religions which have been placed at the museum for display and most staff members agreed that 'excellent knowledge' of these religions and culture would make the categorisation and archiving of them a less controversial issue, as a more all-rounded interpretation of the collections would be more achievable. An example of confusion in PRM is that most displays contain objects from different geographic areas and from different historical periods and the museum does not focus on presenting any one religion in more depth. As a result of this visitors do not get to understand any religion. There is a similar situation at HSM where the focus is on the scientific interpretations of their permanent collections, which excludes the religious and cultural background to the objects, but in contrast the temporary exhibitions with new ways of displaying and interpreting brought in by the new Director can be focused on different elements in addition to science.

Temporary exhibitions are important in other ways as well, one of them being to increase the number of visitors. The Public Engagement Officer at HSM, thinks "it might get a new audience, like people that wouldn't necessarily come to the museum. Might be more interested in a special exhibition about that specific subject and come along just to see that and then be like, Oh, maybe I'll come back and see the rest of the museum.". This implies that temporary exhibitions could be the gateway into more overall interaction with the whole museum. This is mentioned in the background chapter with the example of the Jewish Museum London very cleverly having temporary exhibitions which emphasise how Jewish culture is embedded in British lives. The author strongly recommends that rotating temporary displays are included in the standard practice of museums with Islamic collections because this will create more

motivation for visitors to come in and will address the issue of visitors not knowing whether they are interested enough to come in specifically to see the Islamic collections.

4.1.3 Staff Training and Education for Effective Curation of Islamic Collections

The Head of Research, Teaching and Collections at HSM comments during his interview with the author on the lack of accessibility of the Islamic Collection, "though added by the Younger Producers initiative – is still relatively narrow in its ability to engage with all visitors". Therefore, even after a lot of updates, there still is not as much accessibility as preferred, meaning the display must have been in a very non-interactive state beforehand. The Public Engagement Officer HSM, elaborates on this and mentions that "after the Young Producers interventions, it is more accessible, but is now very text heavy and not visually consistent which isn't great. It's also not improved the text that was there before." This could suggest that staff members are not well equipped in the skills required to update collections. The author recommends, as a result of this, that the staff need to be better informed and educated on the Islamic collections, in particular making sure to include different angles for each object in the gallery, for example handcraft, culture, materials and religious stories.

During PRM staff interviews with the author on the collections being laid out typologically, the Senior Gallery Assistant reiterates the point that "it seems to be the museum's policy to not interpret objects for the general public". However, the Curator and Joint Head of Collections at PRM, highlights that "the Islamic material has not been heavily worked on, or for that matter requested, over the last twenty years." She believes "it is possible that people don't think of PRM with significant holdings, so new and refreshed displays could highlight

this". This comment from the PRM curator brings up the idea that Islamic displays and objects do not have to be all grouped together to become highlighted or accessible to the public. It is more of a case of clear integration with the rest of the museum's collections for them to fit within the overall context of the museum which can be deduced by the visitors on an individual basis. Dr Ackermann, Director of HSM, mentions that "the aim is to make it accessible for all", which means that staff are aware of some shortfalls, however they are not straightforward to fix. This should be noted when answering the thesis question, as this could mean that a slow process of display improvement puts staff off working with the Islamic collections.

This can also be understood by the case study analysis of HSM. To curate and archive particularly HSM-type Islamic scientific material, ideally excellent cultural, linguistic, mathematical and scientific expertise is present. To work with such material, for example in an education setting, there might be a need for basic knowledge, but considerable interpretative skills and familiarity with school curricula. Most of the collection is too specific, difficult to understand and explain. What differentiates 'excellent' from 'good' in practice in collection display is very much dependent upon the standards of a given museum. The depth of knowledge one would ideally have can vary according to one's role. An Education Officer at HSM said 'I wouldn't say that I have in-depth knowledge, to be honest.' Therefore, the author strongly recommends that the objects are only curated by a professional who knows how to curate an exhibition on Islamic technology by presenting the objects within their cultural context. The author wants to propose to build a bridge between the insider and outsider knowledge and understanding in order to build a carefully curated and categorized collection.

This also emphasises how necessary it is to have a 360-degree perspective of an object and collection. When the author asked the Education Officer at HSM about refreshing the display of the Islamic collections, the officer stated, 'I think it could be displayed a lot better'

and further on in the interview 'if people have a quite sort of prejudiced, narrow views about Islamic culture, I think it's important to show them, the rich intellectual achievements of civilization in the past.' The Research Facilitator at HSM added 'it is necessary to refresh the Islamic display which rejuvenates the belief of the Muslims as a whole, however, it is possible for members of the public to still relate without a completely modernised perspective.' Dr Ackermann, the Director of HSM, said ''Science in the service of religion' is one of the topics at the heart of the Museum's strategy going forward - not just Islam, but also other Book Religions. This will enable us to display our collections from the Islamic World in a much broader context.' When Islamic scientific objects are displayed and integrated into the museum, it creates a better and broader sense of the Muslim world and allows non-Muslims to interpret the Muslim faith and culture from a different perspective.

4.1.4 Need for Improved Display Techniques and Community Engagement

The University of Oxford Development Officer said that there is a need to include modern display techniques such as 'touch screens' when exhibiting the Islamic collections to attract a broader range of audiences. Touch screens allow visitors to access further important background information and shared cultural stories about the Islamic artefacts in front of them in the display. The Collections Management Assistant at HSM said 'the artefacts were generally considered to be difficult to understand and interpret in the Western world by the visitors. After interviews with the Front of House Manager and the Public Engagement Officer for PRM, the author found out that the visitors were not able to immediately access further background information about the objects inside the museum. This highlighted the need, from a management point of view, to install touch screens, to organise guided tours and events related to the Islamic collections. Since conducting this dissertation, the two museums have

started a project called ‘Multaka’ to include local communities' voices to enhance the databases and archives of both museums. The author was the Collections Officer for HSM within the Multaka project in (2018-2020), working at HSM on the Islamic Scientific collections.

The Front of House Manager at PRM was asked about his knowledge and information about Islamic collections and places. He answered that he does not know much about the Islamic collection as there are many collections in the museums which represent different cultures and religions. He cannot differentiate the general historic collection of other countries from the Islamic collection. He was asked how he thinks the Muslim visitors to PRM relate to the Islamic objects. In answer, he stated that their Muslim visitors compare their objects with the religious objects of other religions such as Jewish, Christian and Buddhist. He knows this information through his daily supervisions and discussions with the front of house team. He writes a daily report reflecting FOH daily information to be shared monthly with the director. Through the comparison, they feel much more associated and connected with their religious objects. The respondent was asked if the Muslims ask for objects which they could relate to, to which he replied that the visitors who come there ask the FOH about their religious objects to understand the meaning of such objects, but not otherwise and they can search for the objects by themselves. Most of the visitors do not need any assistance from staff or management in searching for objects relating to their culture. However, the Gallery Supervisor at HSM stated that ‘There is currently an issue with regards to explaining the basic functionality of the objects. There is also very little wider historical context to place the objects in, for visitors (and staff!) who have limited knowledge of the Islamic world.'

Staff members were asked from where these collections originated. The purpose of this question was to determine the geographical breadth of Islamic objects and collections in the museums, as this could change the way museums approach displaying them as there seemed to

be a very large range – from Spain to Pakistan and India. Some examples of areas at HSM, the map inside the Islamic World case which objects are from include Egypt, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Morocco, and North Africa, bearing in mind that these modern country names relate to areas within borders defined during World War I and World War II. It is important to note that, although all these countries share the same mainstream religion and the language of the Muslim holy book the Quran, which is regarded by Muslims as being unchanged since the 7th century CE, there is a huge range of different cultures. This could make defining a collection or object as Islamic fruitful and beneficial because it is necessary to discuss and explore the extent to which each object represents Islam and local culture, and this is where good open relationships with Muslim staff and local Muslim communities can be key and would help to develop an ongoing open-minded dialogue. One way to collect and record information about the wider context, religious practice, cultural background, uses or stories associated with each object, is to, as a matter of routine, get a second opinion from members of the community from which the objects come.

All staff members from HSM and PRM are already comfortable with working with all of the communities associated with the Islamic collections within the museum. However, a few staff members commented about being aware as non-Muslims of not exerting authority or knowledge over Muslims as well as always being open to learning and improving their knowledge, which is a crucial attitude to have when trying to accurately categorise objects. The openness of staff and their being comfortable with working with Islamic collections is paramount. A more accurate categorisation process results from the staff being familiar with the basic history behind the objects, having these objects as part of their special field of interest, and finding researching the collections fascinating.

Staff members from PRM and HSM were asked in their interview with the author whether they would be comfortable working with these communities and 100% of staff members responded with 'Yes', however this could have been seen as a leading question and a 'No' response might have been taken as a potentially racist. Dr Laura van Broekhoven, Director of PRM, mentions the "specifically designed program for this working with refugees", however she emphasises that "most people with an Islamic background do not have an interest scope that is only limited to their specific religion, but are interested in the museum's breadth and depth". The Education Officer HSM, thinks "there is always more to learn and opportunities to improve." And working with communities from the origin of the collections could be a great learning point. Some staff members highlighted that they would be comfortable doing so within the capacity of their professional knowledge of the collections, which is not always on the religious aspect of them. In contrast, the Public Engagement Officer HSM would rather "focus on the history of science and technology aspect, not the role within religion." Communities can offer a different perspective to museum staff when working with the collections and often bring a unique insight and interpretation to the collections. Having community input could improve accessibility of these collections for communities that could potentially feel alienated from their own heritage.

4.1.5 Analysis of Methods for Working with Islamic Collections in UK Museums

Methods discussed during the interview with the author with the staff from both PRM and HSM shows an array of different ideas and methods which have been implemented or which are still in the planning stage. Dr Silke Ackermann, the Director of HSM lists "Outreach, teaching, special events and co-curation" and emphasises that "Engaging source communities is one of the strategic aims of the Museum." This type of initiative aligns with the background

chapter discussion of using source communities in a symbiotic relationship, with both parties benefiting from the partnership. In this chapter, Paine debates how much a museum should consult "their objects' source communities" and the visitors that will be drawn to these exhibitions (Paine 2013). This confirms how origin communities are a valuable source of information for museum staff because they can provide insight into objects that would interest visitors more than a purely academic interpretation.

The Engagement Officer at PRM takes the approach of "asking people what they want to work with the collections and how." She then goes on to discuss the role of the museum in this regard in more depth and states that "we have a commitment to ensure the information on the database is enriched with as many voices as possible, our narratives are relevant (this can only come from communities where the collections come from) and the representation is from the people the objects represent." 'Therefore, they emphasise a continuing discussion around to what extent the communities should be involved in the curation of these collections.'

During the interviews with the author, it has been noticed all staff members from both PRM and HSM feel comfortable working with these collections for a variety of different reasons. Dr Silke Ackermann, Director of HSM, feels very comfortable as "it is my special field of interest." The Project Curator and Engagement Officer PRM, adds data to this trend as she feels "comfortable working with them, but they are not from my culture, so I am perhaps not as confident working with them as others. I might be oblivious to some sensitivities, for example". Awareness or lack of awareness of sensitivities is a debate discussed in the background chapter, as "Overall there has been a shift in how museums categorise and catalogue these objects but there needs to be more of awareness of their social value to visitors attending (Museums Association 2005)." This concept seems to be reflected in the PRM and HSM staff answers.

In terms of examining the authority of UK Museums, The Public Engagement Officer at HSM mentions that "'a good understanding' would be more realistic and then they could have support from someone with excellent knowledge" and it is "valuable to spend time in the company of Muslims to properly understand their significance to provide sufficiently faithful interpretation". The Team Leader, Move Project at HSM elaborates on this point in their answers to the research questionnaires and brings forward the idea of co-curation - "I believe in the power of co-curation. If someone has basic knowledge and understanding, they should know where to go to obtain further support". For example, a curator could increase their 'good understanding' to 'excellent understanding' only in the section of Islamic collections they are interacting with, therefore not requiring an all-round excellent general knowledge of all aspects of Islamic Collections to maintain a good level of curatorial authority. Reaching the high level identified as "Excellent knowledge and understanding" in the research survey was justified by being able to appreciate the "complex meanings" of Islamic objects and collections, as a Gallery Attendant at HSM said. However, appreciating the 'complex meanings' was also mentioned within the "good understanding", so this difference could be down to the variation in professional opinions. It can also "depend on the museum context". "Museum context" is more specific than the general context, which shows that each museum must tailor their approaches depending on their museum set up. The author thinks that even with excellent academic knowledge there is still a knowledge gap amongst professional museum staff due to the lack of access to insights which Muslim professionals in the Museum Sector, Muslim volunteers and Muslim communities provide.

The method of working with these communities where the collection comes from can greatly affect the outcomes of these collaborations. As discussed in the background chapter, the role of the museum is to help "shape community identity and bring different community

groups together (Museum Association report, 2010).” This confirms that museums have shifted from a primarily educational and entertainment role to becoming in addition a meeting point or middle ground for communities to connect and feel less isolated.

4.1.6 Staff Knowledge and Collaborations in Managing Islamic Collections in PRM and HSM

The kind of knowledge which is needed to manage and curate these sensitive and unique objects was a topic discussed and brought up in the author’s research. Staff members at both PRM and HSM were asked about their opinions on how much knowledge staff should have in order to handle Islamic collections well. This is significant when answering the thesis question, as it relates to the accessibility of Islamic collections through the knowledge conveyed in the displays, which museum staff are predominantly in charge of. When staff members were asked to rate their knowledge of Islamic collections, the Primary Education Officer at HSM said, “wouldn’t say that I have in-depth knowledge” of the objects. She works across the range of all collections in the museum, including the Islamic collections. As the museum is full of many “different objects and cultures” it would take a long time to learn about everything in detail, therefore indicating that it would be unrealistic for staff members to be able to have in depth knowledge of the Islamic collections.

Dr Silke Ackermann, the Director of HSM has “spent most of my academic life working on the collection from the Islamic world, and manuscripts from the Islamic world.”. However, similarly to Primary Education Officer, at HSM, she acknowledges that “we can always improve on knowledge” as there is always more to know about collections. The Collections Officer at PRM, reiterates the same point as Dr Ackermann and agrees that although a “a good understanding would be wanted, especially with culturally sensitive materials”, however, the Collection Officer believes that what’s more “important is the willingness to research and learn

more as you work with the collections". The Conservator at HSM mentions that her knowledge "depends on what work is required for an object", which adequately sums up the overview of the level of knowledge staff members have across the board. This points to localised knowledge of certain aspects of the Islamic collection, instead of a more rounded 360-degree perspective of the context of Islamic objects.

The Project Curator and Engagement Officer at PRM elaborates on this further by acknowledging that a "deeper understanding" of Islamic objects would be preferable if using them in teaching. However, much like the Conservator at HSM, she agrees it is "very dependent on how you are working with them", as well as the reason behind working with them. For example, she mentions that "if they are one or two objects in a larger display and you are just choosing them for their shape or colour or place of origin, the knowledge can be very basic". All these factors are important to consider when answering the title question of the thesis, as although there should be a focus on cultural sensitivities in relation to Islamic objects, practicalities need to be considered when asking about a baseline for minimum knowledge required of an Islamic collection. What the author means by practicalities is the choice of specialisation of each staff member, the amount of free time they have to enhance their knowledge and whether it would be relevant to doing their job effectively.

The author found out via the questionnaires which were conducted in 2018 with staff from both PRM and HSM that they were aware of two projects, one which was already completed and one which was in the early stage of development. An HSM staff member mentioned the 'Power and Protection' exhibition at the Ashmolean which featured objects on loan from HSM as well as the OXLOD digital project, (Oxford Linked Open Data pilot project), which extracted data about Islamic material from the collections databases from multiple different museums. This was evidence of growing awareness among staff of the

existence of joint working and knowledge sharing between the two museums to enrich their databases and increase visitor numbers interested in Islamic religious objects. Members of staff (Deputy Director and Communication Officer) at HSM told the author that they were aware that there was going to be a joint activity happening between HSM and PRM funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (later named the Multaka Project), working with refugees from Muslim backgrounds. These collaborations enhanced the museum database and employed people from the different countries represented in the Islamic collections and showed that the perspectives displayed in the exhibitions are moderated by parties other than the museum itself.

The author asked, 'How might you work with the communities where the collection comes from and why?' The HSM staff had been exposed to working with communities related to the collections for an extended period therefore there were many different suggestions. They suggested making connections through social media, blog posts, advertisements, as well as other digitised resources such as "online collections and demonstration of websites". Other methods included public/family events and activities for local schools, to bring together families, this would create an opening for some written contributions about "what the objects mean to them and why?" from the Muslim communities which could then be used in displays with the objects. They mentioned "Outreach, teaching, special events, co-curation" as well as developing community curatorial groups to assist with research and display. The author saw that the staff at HSM wanted to bring the communities right into the museum with a new recruitment strategy, in this way developing a symbiotic relationship between the two groups. Further suggestions given by the staff at HSM include developing "opportunities where community groups can work with the collections/museum to enhance their work/agendas" and working with them within an "employment capacity". However, the most common example from the HSM staff was creating activities which target aspects which engage the cultures of

local communities through the collections, as this is the most effective way to attract a large range of demographics to one place and create connections from there.

A Community Engagement Officer PRM wrote in answer to the author's question 'How might you work with communities where the collection comes from and why?' about how important it is to "ask the communities how they would like to work with us and why, rather than approaching the communities to fulfil a need of the Museum's". This allows both the museums and communities to make the most of any collaborations as they are both self-motivated. Another Education Officer at PRM wrote that doing this also makes sure that the museum "narratives are relevant, and the representation is from the people that the objects represent". There is also mention of a "specifically designed program for this, working with refugees" however in the opinion of the Director of PRM 'most people with a Muslim background who are interested in the museum are interested in the entire breadth and depth of the museum.' There is an overall consensus among the staff who answered the questionnaires about the value of bringing in communities for activities related to the correct interpretation of objects in the Islamic collections so that the museum can enhance their archive and collections database. These activities would include family friendly events as well as public guided tours.

Both PRM and HSM staff are aware of the GLAM project, which is a joint project between PRM and HSM. Community Engagement Officer PRM, mentions this same project that is funded by the "Esmée Fairbairn Collection". The Conservator HSM, also talks about the "Multaka Project" and the Head of Research, Teaching and Collections HSM focuses on the "work with the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies" and the "OXLOD digital project" which was a crossover of HSM and the Ashmolean.

There seems to be a relatively wide range of activities taking place with both PRM and HSM in terms of their Islamic Collections. Some of these projects are not just within the Oxford

Museum community, for example working with the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. This could widen accessibility to communities who would not otherwise be aware of these Islamic collections.

The author asked, 'How informed do the staff feel with regard to the Islamic Collections?' to explore staff views. This is because, the more informed staff are, the more accurate and thought-through the collection displays will be. This is a similar point to one from earlier, however this is specifically to do with the Islamic collections, rather than collections in general. 48% of HSM staff members stated, see figure 4.3 Staff questionnaire for HSM in the appendix, that they have a 'very basic to no understanding' of the Islamic collections. Many staff members have an academic background in History which they feel helps to raise their understanding to a basic level. They also rely on accessing the online databases in order to research items in the Islamic collections.

However, some HSM staff members suggested in their answers to the questionnaires that it is not the museum's responsibility to teach staff members about collections and they need to have a personal interest in the collections. This is an interesting viewpoint, as it contradicts the points made above which suggest that for museums to have academic authority, it is the responsibility of the deputy director and their curatorial team to make sure that all HSM staff are as informed as possible on the collections. This is interesting, as these staff members are suggesting that to truly earn their academic authority, there needs to be genuine interest among HSM staff about their Islamic collections, rather than mandatory knowledge acquisition. To further elaborate on this, staff members bring forward the idea that it is not just about understanding the collection but also about understanding the Islamic faith, culture and language through interaction with community groups, ongoing internal education and training sessions. The author strongly recommends that museums should have ongoing connections

between the curator or collections staff and the rest of the museum staff especially the FOH team as they are the people who are directly in contact with the audiences.

Turning to PRM, staff members highlighted in their answers to the author's questionnaire a controversial topic in the museum sector - decolonisation and de-stereotyping - and how this relates to Islamic objects. The Director of PRM, Dr Laura Van Broekhoven, mentioned in her interview with the author that there is a much wider problem with stereotyping rather than colonisation when it comes to Islamic collections. This leads on to the next question which asks whether the museums need to act as a platform to combat these stereotypes and the negative media coverage regarding Islam. The Director, who has previously overseen the curation of Islamic collections in multiple museums, thinks that museums can be the perfect place to have conversations about how Islam is very similar to other cultures and how stigma can be removed through mediated knowledgeable conversations and debates. These conversations can be between communities or academic individuals.

The Collections Management Officer at HSM stated in the interview with the author that they believe "we have a moral imperative" to raise awareness due to "the rise of Islamophobia and it gets worse by, by all accounts." This is the attitude discussed in the background chapter through the studies of Ocello, which show the importance of "Role of museums, being responsive to be responsible, can be in keeping with the mission, and is an ethical use of time, staff and funds.". This is a change in the museum sector because there is an increase in more explicit efforts to tackle issues such as Islamophobia within museums and the museums themselves are using their authority to do so. Dr Laura van Broekhoven, Director of PRM, told the author that she thinks that "any way that collections can be used to combat or to, let's say to breach" Islamophobic thoughts should be considered. Dr Silke Ackermann, Director of HSM, shared in her interview with the author that she believes "we need to think

far more creatively, and we also need to empower young people to proudly speak about their origin without immediately being put into a kind of almost ISIS label." The author recommends that clear and visible efforts to promote understanding of Islam by museums which have Islamic collections can increase accessibility and combat Islamophobia by contradicting negative propaganda in the media. It is possible that Islamophobia creates a stigma around Islamic collections for some visitors, therefore, if they are given an opportunity to reinterpret Islam, they would be more able to enjoy and learn from these displays.

Dr Van Broekhoven, in her reply to the author's questionnaire, elaborates on this with the idea of beginning to make more use of the Islamic collections with a temporary exhibition which is explicitly about highlighting religious objects in the main museum display. Often museums trial ideas within temporary exhibitions which then become permanent. The author has seen this happening at HSM during her time working as Collections Officer and FOH. Dr Van Broekhoven mentions that it would bring more voices into the museum and would allow religion to be more visible, whilst also encouraging inter-faith interactions. She also links this to the importance of including emotions and suggests that rationalising everything sometimes mutes certain community and object narratives. The author thinks that doing this could enhance the museum displays in general and make more use of the academic authority the museum holds.

The Front of House employee at PRM stated in the written answer to the author's questionnaire that they have staff who could provide information to the visitors who asked for it. The staff who work at the front of house are both Muslim and non-Muslim and they also are from different countries such as: Zimbabwe, Spain, Ireland, Italy, the United States of America and Palestine, but most of the workers are Europeans who have a good command of and understanding of the subject of Islamic art. The author asked the Director of HSM, Dr Silke

Ackermann, as part of her research interview to discuss diversity in the museum's staff and whether there needs to be a quota on BAME staff members. In her interview, Dr Ackermann stated that there should be staff members appointed for their expertise and due to being the best candidate, rather than just being appointed to fill a quota. She then explained that instead there needs to be wider encouragement throughout all the communities to make people aware of what Museum Studies can offer and to paint the sector in a more appealing light. This is an example of not misusing the power of a museum, as although it is important to not discriminate against candidates because of their race, it is equally unethical to hire staff to fill a quota rather than for their skills, which could compromise the integrity of the museum.

4.2 Visitor Surveys

Fifty people were surveyed, including museum employees, to get a more complete picture of PRM and HSM; 80% of those employees from both museums agreed that it was important to update both the permanent and temporary exhibitions to make them more accessible. However, the vast majority of staff and visitors (about 70-80%) agree that the exhibit is difficult to navigate and comprehend. However, 5% of PRM's staff members brought up a point that visitors won't be able to understand much about the Islamic artefacts' cultural context from the labels, since there is so little of it. Given that around 20% of the staff and tourists found the Islamic exhibits to be unsatisfactory, this question seeks to go further into the expert view on how much of a difference a "refreshed display" would make for the engagement of both the personnel and the guests. In addition, over 90% of PRM and HSM employees said that they believe the Muslim community has the potential to generate greater public interest in the collection. Some argue that this is because people with Muslim backgrounds would have a stronger sense that their history is being honoured and represented

if they visited these collections. An focus on a non-Western collection might attract more than just Muslim tourists, suggesting that doing so will help all members of underrepresented groups feel more appreciated. To attract a wider audience, however, 3% of visitors across both museums mentioned the need of incorporating cutting-edge display methods like 'touch screens' into the presentation of Islamic artefacts.

The author structured the visitor survey questions to look at how objects and their labels were perceived by visitors when looking at specific displays in both HSM and PRM. Their answers gave the author data to analyse in order to gain further understanding into the barriers which limit the accessibility of the Islamic objects and collections in both PRM and HSM. As mentioned in the Staff Interviews section, the two main aspirations of the HSM and PRM museums when it comes to their role as communicators - their aim to express the thoughts and concepts of the cultures which their objects represent, and their aim to represent the variety of visitors and their cultures within the UK through their galleries – can have an impact upon the experience of museum visitors.

Visitor Comments on HSM and PRM Islamic Collection Visibility and Accessibility

A visitor who filled in the questionnaire stated for the HSM: “I don't spend a great deal of time in the galleries, but my impression is that generally, the permanent displays contain many objects with many details. Some audio guides and education trails together with occasional special exhibitions help to provide reasonable accessibility, but overall - especially with the permanent display - they're more suited to specialists”. This was a consensus in most visitor questionnaires, more so in the HSM versions compared to PRM. This opens up a common perception of Islamic galleries among museum visitors and questions whether museums are living up to the standard expected of them to effectively act as communicators.

As also mentioned in the Staff Interviews section, clear from the visitor answers is that an overwhelming majority believe that the display lacks both accessibility and basic understanding. Some of the visitors mention that the displays are still text-heavy with very small print and explain things in a way that may not translate directly to people who do not have any background knowledge of the Islamic collections. The reasons given by the HSM visitors who were not able to see the objects included: the objects not being well highlighted, too many objects in one case, objects being mixed with other types of objects and therefore difficult to point out to people who don't have prior knowledge. For the PRM visitors, they listed the reasons as: not clearly labelled, a lot of objects in each case, and no separation of Islamic objects from the others.

Along with the staff members, visitors who answered my surveys expressed their opinions on whether more should be done about increasing the visibility of the Islamic collections. An overwhelming majority of both HSM and PRM responders to the surveys were in favour of further visibility of the Islamic objects. This is because they find that Islamic collections are interesting to learn about, but that the collections are not being utilised in a way that visitors can fully interact with. Moreover, as there are more European collections, the Islamic collections can be overlooked, so further visibility will make the museum as a whole more interactive.

Eight white British visitors, (all of whom were Agnostic/Atheist) at PRM and seven mixed background (but all non-Muslim) visitors at HSM, see the table F in the appendix, criticised the idea of highlighting collections and mentioned that there may not be a need to make the collections solely about religion, therefore visibility about Islamic objects, in general, is not important. Moreover, one of the visitors surveyed said that "it is a science museum and not a museum about religion so religious context should be less important and it is only really

necessary to bring up the religious background and cultural context of an object if it is relevant to its scientific context." The author argues here that the title of the museum can direct visitors to focus on a specific subject related to their collections, and in this case the focus is scientific. For instance, an Islamic Astrolabe in the History of Science Museum will be more interesting to a visitor because of its use or function related to astronomy and astrology rather than related to stories of culture or religion.

This section will examine the background knowledge of visitors before encountering the Islamic collections. When visitors were asked about their prior knowledge of Islam, the month of Ramadan was the most well-known aspect of Islam – this was what most visitors knew about Islam before visiting either museum. The Quran, Hajj, and the Arabic language were also some of the best-known aspects of Islam to visitors. After this question, visitors were asked how they learnt about Islam before visiting the museums. For both PRM and HSM, visitors mainly knew about Islam through the news and media, with friends and family being a close second. School/education also came third for both museums as a source of knowledge about Islam.

In addition to staff opinions concerning the importance of showing the role of Islamic culture within modern UK culture, visitors mentioned that if they were aware of any museum publications or resources linked to the Islamic Collections, this could increase the level of visitor satisfaction, as they would gain more from their visits; however, 84% of PRM visitors were unaware of such resources and for HSM 88% of visitors were unaware of these resources. The next group of questions in these findings is about how proactive the visitors think the museums are in their roles as communicators.

The question of how visitors consider specific galleries and how they determine whether they would be classed as a display of Islamic artefacts is a good measure of whether

these activities have been successful in integrating the Islamic collections further into the museum/visitor experience. For HSM, the Top Gallery and Entrance gallery stood out to most visitors as 'scientific' more than 'Islamic' and were described as 'educational', 'scientific' and 'interesting', see table A in the appendix. For PRM the collections mentioned were the Religious Figures, Artefacts and Amulets collections, see table B in the appendix. The visitors pointed out significant galleries and collections, therefore indicating that these surveys were effective in finding out their opinions.

There is much discussion on the extent to which it is acceptable to adjust the collection's perspective to suit the demographic of visitors and their own perspectives, which affects the display style chosen. For example, one visitor replied to the survey in HSM, pointing out how important it is to understand that Western objects displayed in the Western world should not make Islamic collections look isolated and conservative to visitors who are unfamiliar with the culture and religion. The author believes this is not necessarily due to any prejudice but could be due to the visitors' lack of exposure to Islamic objects in the Western world.

Visitors also stated that the objects which belong to a certain faith/religion (see tables A and B in the appendix) require more specific knowledge about rituals to understand their true meanings. This includes the scientific inventions and mechanisms which were used to demonstrate the concepts of physics and chemistry. One visitor specifically mentioned that the objects which have been placed on display at PRM are rare and they need to be shown in a more prominent manner, which is possible with temporary exhibitions and through the practical demonstration of these objects. This feedback applies to the categorisation theme of the Discussion section, as what the visitors are saying relates to how the objects are grouped and how links are made between other objects and collections. The majority of these three different demographic groups, White British, Atheist or Christian, from the HSM visitor survey, see

table F in the appendix, also stated that they try to relate the Islamic objects to science rather than to religion.

It is relevant in this chapter to discuss what makes an object 'Islamic' to both staff members, the public and in the literature. The author asked this question in the visitor survey: 'What do you think makes a museum object "Islamic"?' (see the results in table C in the appendix). There is not necessarily a right answer and there is no agreed definition of an 'Islamic Object' as yet within the museum sector in the UK, which leads to a lot of discussions among museum staff when cataloguing and archiving museum collections. While interpreting the visitor questionnaires (see table C in the appendix), it has been seen that most of the public, when they identify the objects in front of them as Islamic, base this on recognising Arabic writing and Islamic patterns. However, both HSM and PRM still rely on the old labelling systems inherited from previous directors of the museums, although some progress has been made to add new labels at HSM through pilot projects. One of these was 'Young Producers', which focused on relabelling some of the objects in the Islamic World case to make it more accessible. The author used this new labelling created by the pilot project as a basis for visitors' surveys to measure how successful the new labelling was to make the Islamic objects accessible (see table C in the appendix).

One suggestion from a visitor at HSM, a White British person living in the UK and a first-time visitor to HSM, was that it would be preferable to have more exhibitions which are clearly about a certain faith or culture as this could attract a wider range of people and enable a better understanding and interpretation of the objects.

Visitors were also asked what features make an object Islamic. Most visitors consider where the item is from, who made it, and the presence of the Arabic language on the object. Visitors were also asked whether they could recognise an Islamic object among others without

reading the labels. The majority of both PRM and HSM visitors could not identify Islamic objects without context, which highlights the need to offer clear and in-depth information when displaying Islamic objects. The labelling of the objects and collections could be made clearer when re-categorising and archiving them, potentially by grouping certain objects or placing the objects in a formation which tells a story.

The author gave the visitors a chance to classify specific displays containing Islamic objects in several galleries in both museums (see table A in the appendix). Looking at the answers given by visitors to HSM (see table A in the appendix), the scientific category was chosen for the largest number of galleries, with the cultural category coming second. This shows that the way visitors perceive HSM is mainly through a scientific lens, which is understandable as the museum is called the History of Science Museum which implies a heavily scientific theme. In this case, it is not a negative thing, but the staff need to be aware of this tendency to focus on science rather than the human stories behind the science. This an example of how HSM's name can influence how visitors classify the galleries and collections.

The author asked visitors to HSM to find and then to stand in front of specific displays in order to answer a questionnaire which asked which qualities of the objects in the display cases led them to identify them as Islamic (see table C in the appendix). Following on from this the visitors were asked to write what made this object attractive or appealing. The objects in the display offered by the author to the visitors included a sundial, an early astrolabe and the map of Mecca. The author asked the visitors to classify the objects in order to recognise how the visitors see and classify Islamic collections. In addition, some visitors to HSM expressed the view that the current exhibitions only covered the present from a scientific viewpoint although the objects on display were in fact part of a display showing that the Islamic world makes up an important part of world history.

4.3 The Findings: Key Themes

Reviewing the data sets and the findings discussed above, four key themes can be laid out:

4.3.1 Lack of Accessibility and Engagement

There is a very immediate and obvious opinion that stands out in both the staff and visitor answers that the overwhelming majority believe that the display is lacking in accessibility and basic understanding to some degree. Within the context of this question, a common project mentioned is the ‘Youth Producers’ which is a project improving the accessibility of the Islamic collection's display. The majority of the staff members in HSM mention that although the Youth Producers did improve the display to an extent, especially to younger visitors, there is however still a barrier present that needs to be addressed.

Visitor’s perception of the gallery message as well as staff interpretation of the collections are affected by the broader image of the museums. A Gallery supervisor at HSM commented on this by saying “The current display has had additions to it from the Youth Forum that make it more accessible for younger audiences or for those without the inclination to engage with the more in-depth labels. The failure of the current display is that it doesn't tell a story - there isn't a thoroughgoing 'hook' for our visitors. This is not a weakness that's confined to the Islamic display however, as the following quote shows: “I would say it depends on how well-designed the temporary exhibition is. If it fails to engage people, then no, I don't think it will have a positive impact on the permanent display's visitor numbers. If it is an engaging and well-designed exhibition, then potentially yes”. This analysis by an HSM staff member acknowledges the visitor’s perspective and shows that staff recognise that there is overall unhappiness with the museum displays from both a professional and recreational point of view.

4.3.2 The Need for Scholars

Every HSM staff member surveyed knows activities held around the Islamic collections. This shows that the Islamic collections are not overlooked in HSM and there is an effort made to make the displays as dynamic as possible for the public, with the materials they have, which fulfils their effort to make the museum a place of learning. The 'CURATE project', board games about Medieval Islamic medicine, 'Young Producers', Astrolabe-making workshops for KS2 and KS3 school children, and family-friendly events such as 'The women and science trail', were only some of the activities mentioned by staff.

However, one of the front of house staff also recommended that they would benefit from a once-a-month session on deepening their knowledge of Islam and Islamic culture, about which they could start informing people in advance. For this, they currently do not have any scholars who could help in this regard, but they could hire people for specific sessions who could be asked to come and provide background knowledge about Muslim culture. Being front of house officers, it is the responsibility of the staff and the in-house manager to be aware of all the public events at the museum, and also to be ready to offer visitors suggestions about future cross-cultural events focusing on Islam in which they could take part. The FOH role is essential to encourage regular and new visitors to be aware of the present and future events which are inspired by the Museum's Islamic collections.

4.3.3 Labelling Issues

While the History of Science Museum has a problem presenting its Islamic collections starting with its very name which focuses attention away from Islamic culture and on to the purely scientific aspects of the collections, in contrast the Pitt Rivers Museum has a typological

policy when putting together displays, therefore it is difficult to look at and assess the Islamic collection as a whole because the objects are widely dispersed and displayed in many different cases throughout the museum. Another point raised by a staff member at PRM is that the museum has very little interpretation on the labels in displays, so the visitors will not learn about the cultural background to the Islamic objects by looking at their labels. In addition, one member of staff explained this museum-wide approach in their answer to the staff questionnaire using the phrase "visitors creating their connections to the objects", implying that the museum does not want to direct the visitor's response. In addition, the name of the Pitt Rivers Museum does not give any clues about what the narrative within the museum will be, and neither will the original labelling within the typological displays. As a result, the museum intends that every visitor has a unique experience within the ethnographic and anthropological displays, just as it is said that when a person walks into a museum, he or she walks into a narrative (Osterhammel: 2014). The author aims from this paper to say 'Science' could be a key to draw people's attention to the religion of Islam, exploring both historical and current aspects of Islamic culture, and showing its impact on civilisation, therefore having an impact on reducing Islamophobia in the UK.

However, when staff members assessed the overall displays of the individual Islamic objects, there is a consensus that it is an appropriate average – not inaccessible, but not oversimplified to the point that the initial message is lost. There is further focus on the size of the text and the use of language that is not necessarily easy to interpret by all types of demographics. One staff member points out that the display "takes for granted everyone knows how an astrolabe works" and therefore the display has not been designed for common "visitors but only for intellectuals". There was further discussion regarding the labels themselves and

many PRM and HSM visitors said it was quite difficult due to the light being dim, small labels, short labels that were not very informative, lacking in context or the printing being too small.

Further on in the questionnaire, the staff were asked: "How would a refreshed display of Islamic collections add to the rest of the museum?". The author has grouped these questions as it gives an overall, zoomed-out perspective of the bigger picture as well as a clearer view of the bigger and less specialised research on similar topics. This is important to bear in mind whilst reading this findings section as it will make links to the background chapter clearer and provide more context for the reader in the discussion. This question follows on from the passage above regarding how much the Islamic galleries are lacking in their ability to engage visitors to their full potential. As seen above, both the staff and visitors described the Islamic displays as unsatisfactory, so this question delves deeper into the professional opinion on the difference a 'refreshed display' would make for both staff and visitor engagement. For some context for the reader, HSM has a scientific Islamic Astrolabe collection displayed in the museum and PRM has a large mixture of Islamic collections, such as bowls with Islamic Quranic verses on them, Islamic charms and so on.

4.3.4: Why Refresh Exhibitions: Improving Knowledge and Understanding

The majority of staff members from both PRM and HSM interviewed by the author believe updating the permanent and temporary displays is essential to improve accessibility. The Community Engagement Officer at PRM reflects the literature where Nicholas Thomas, Director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University, discusses how crucial it is to have 'thought-through and creative narratives to promote and express human creativity and the diversity that they represent' (Museum Association 2015). The Community Engagement Officer explains that "it can offer new ways of thinking with the

permanent display, it can try new, innovative, risky narratives that could enrich the permanent display". This emphasises the large number of possibilities temporary displays can offer, just as in the Jewish Museum Case study and in others. This could bring in a newfound flexibility for staff members to experiment with and explore methods of engaging visitors. Dr Ackermann, Director of HSM mentions when the author asked her about experimenting with new displays that "if we get it wrong, we get it wrong, it's about, we learn from it. That's precisely the point. So, it's learning from mistakes, but also learning from something which we didn't expect might happen. So, the answer is yes. A resounding yes".

Amongst the HSM staff members, there was a consensus that a refreshed display of Islamic collections would be very helpful in inserting the HSM Islamic collections into multiple different broader contexts. Some staff members suggested that it would provide further "historical context to the exhibition". However, the majority of staff members preferred to place the Islamic collections in Western contexts and vice versa, as it would highlight how Western items fit into a wider global context. Furthermore, the staff highlight that "'Science in the service of religion' is one of the topics at the heart of the museum strategy going forward" therefore it is important that it is displayed in the most accessible and dynamic way possible. Multiple staff members mentioned that a refreshed display would allow for a more modern interpretation of the Islamic collections as well as all the other collections in the museum, as it opens up further perspectives across the whole museum. This is seen to reduce the isolation of the collection and would make it easier to interpret by Western audiences. Refreshed displays would draw attention to different parts of the collection therefore enhancing the attraction of displays to a wider range of audiences. This would ultimately lead to the broadening of demographics visiting the museum and the strengthening of relationships between the museum

and different local communities. This would assist the museums to engage with different cultures within the UK more readily and to fulfil their societal role as educational platforms.

4. 4. Conclusion

The findings of this study can thus be summarised into three main points. Firstly, Islamic collections in museums are overlooked. The main reasons for this are their usually small size in comparison to the full extent of the museum's holdings, as well as their dispersal across other themes in museum displays. This relates to the second point, which is that differentiating between religious, cultural, and scientific objects represents a challenge for museums. As these object categories are already inherently connected, incomplete and inaccessible labelling can severely diminish the ability of an Islamic museum collection to successfully draw out the underlying Islamic themes within history of science objects for its audience. Thirdly, the findings highlight the need for museums to build shared and new knowledge. This is both because museums can act as platforms to counter Islamophobia, and also because knowledge about museum objects and collections can be shared by communities outside museums.

Chapter V: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The first theme that will be discussed and explored by the author is the 'The Role of Museums as a Place of Learning', which will help to answer the dissertation question by highlighting that communication is one of the key factors in making any collection accessible. This theme concerns the discussion around using museums as a learning platform for all demographics. The second theme that will be discussed is the museum categorisation and archive debate. This will help to answer the question by discussing the importance of sorting the collection data accurately: for example, whether the object fits into one or more of the culture, science or Islamic categories. This debate includes questions on how museums should categorise and archive objects. In the context of this research paper, this means asking whether museums should categorise and archive Islamic objects, and what makes an object Islamic and how this can this be determined. Moreover, it includes an observation on how visitors respond to curation and labelling, which is a main section in the questionnaires. Under this theme there is a lot to be unpacked and compared, including material of relevance to the later discussion section. The third theme concerns the authority of museums. The author will answer the research question by analysing the questionnaires and the staff interviews which were completed by and with the professional members of staff at both museums. However, it also includes the opinions of the visitors in terms of what they think the role of the staff in museums is and how they should express their authority in wider society. The author believes this is important to discuss as this research paper is not solely answering the research question, it also adds to the literature, specifically regarding Islamic collections; this requires the input of a diverse sample of people for it to fill any gaps in the literature such as the how categorisation needs to evolve to present a clearer narrative of collections such as Islamic ones. Within this

theme, there will also be a subsection of discussion regarding Islamophobia which discusses both professional and visitor opinions on whether museums should play a role in combating this, and if so what type of action should be taken.

5.2 The Role of the Museum as a Place of Learning

Under this theme, the author will discuss and compare the different opinions presented by different groups of people interviewed and surveyed as discussed in the chapter III. It should be noted that these themes cannot be fully separated from each other and there is some overlap when it comes to the analysis of ideas. The author will point out these links to allow the reader to have an all-round perspective of the discussions in this chapter.

It was discussed in the background of chapter II, the author explains that since their origin, museums have had a leading role in society in terms of explaining their collections to visitors. In "*The Role of the Museum in Society"* Arinze emphasises the leading role of museums in our 'modern day society'. This has evolved over the centuries according to changes in society. The author will be addressing recent changes in the role of museums as communicators when it comes to Islamic collections and the Muslim communities in the Western World, specifically the UK.

One of the outcomes or benefits of a temporary exhibition if it is popular among all different types of visitors to the museum is the opportunity to create a permanent exhibition from it. Another outcome is to learn what went well or what needed to be improved from the temporary exhibition and then apply it to the permanent exhibition. Each successful temporary exhibition sets a benchmark in terms of labelling and presentation of the objects for future temporary exhibitions and any changes to the permanent displays.

Objects which belong to very many different religions, including from Islam, are presented at PRM, but the front of house staff have individual levels of expertise on the different cultures and religions the objects come from. In a similar way to the visitors, when asked if they have the staff with knowledge and understanding of the Islamic objects, the front of house staff stated that they currently have very limited knowledge about the objects in their collections, but they are looking to add many effective and knowledgeable staff who could provide the right knowledge and understanding to the visitors who are in search of information. One of the first things that was discussed with both the staff and the public was whether the Islamic displays were suitable for all kinds of visitors regarding intellectual accessibility and basic understanding. Therefore, it is fundamental that each museum create its own solution to make their Islamic collections more accessible to their audiences. However, the author adds to this by suggesting that museums need to have staff who are able to identify and respond to the different demographics within their audiences, in order to enhance the performance of their own museum as a communicator and place of learning.

Asking visitors how they learnt about Islam before visiting the museums was important to consider in the findings because museums are centres of education and "environments, for the purpose of education, study, and enjoyment" (Thompson, 2007). George E. Hein uses educational themes as one of the main research topics along with Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, Jill Hohenstein, Theano Moussouri (Hohenstein, Moussouri, 2017). There is still much debate surrounding the definition of a 'communicator': Hooper-Greenhill questions how to find the right balance between just being a museum and also being a communicator in today's society (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). She mentions that "the theory and practise go hand in hand to find the 'Roles of a Museum'". The author thinks that Greenhill's writings about being a 'communicator' reflect the findings on a refreshed display of Islamic collections, related to the

crucial importance of labels in the displays. Therefore, the author suggests writing clear, easy, and direct information on the labels in order to make them more accessible to the visitors. It is important to consider labelling when discussing museums' roles as communicators and places of learning because it is one of several different factors that play into what might make Islamic collections as accessible as possible.

The author thinks that the Osterhammel opinion that when a person walks into a museum, he or she walks into a narrative (Osterhammel: 2014), aligns with the findings, which show that the visitors may not have prior knowledge of Islamic culture and religion which would help them to put the object in context using their own knowledge plus the written information on the museum labels, so in this case there is naturally more uncertainty when they interact with each object. Therefore, the challenge is to understand how people with little prior knowledge make their own journey as they go through the exhibitions. Furthermore, these problems are intensified by the physical dispersal of the Islamic collections throughout PRM and the downplaying of the Islamic cultural background to the scientific collections within HSM.

During guided tours or by using audio guides, visitors to PRM can enjoy listening to a real story. These tours help the visitors to understand the domain in which they are standing and about the projects which they are looking at or interacting with. The content of the tours or guides however, could be a question, a discussion, a voice-over or a debate. The placement of the objects and the structure of the museums are clear examples of the narratives which people visit (Alexander: 2017). The author agrees with Alexander's point, which emphasises the significance of both the internal layout and the overall themes of each museum in this study.

As discussed in chapter II, the responsibility of a museum as a place of learning is to look at objects and collections from as many different perspectives as possible in order to

engage as many visitors and staff members as possible. This angle is explored in the chapter II in terms of museums as places of learning but also as part of the cultural heritage repatriation debate. This is interesting as it reflects contemporary thinking about taking responsibility for museums' past actions, which has been described as a "national responsibility" for objects to be back on their "original soil" (Boardman 2010). The author agrees with Boardman and adds further that it is important to make reference to the conflicting views surrounding the repatriation of objects to their "original soil" as part of the museums' social responsibility to wider society inside and outside UK.

Although these aspects of Islam are part of the fundamentals, it does point to the lack of knowledge, which, as mentioned above, can stunt the ability of the visitors to fully engage with the collections. Therefore, this suggestion is an appropriate counter measure to the current barriers of understanding between many visitors and the knowledge that could be gained from the museum galleries. Therefore, if the curators present and describe these objects using labels in a way similar to how most of the visitors learnt and understood Islam initially this could make both museums more accessible overall.

Overall, the author suggests that there are a large variety of activities, and this points to the efforts of the museum staff to become more insightful and effectively combine theory and practice to act as more of a platform to connect all local communities, including Muslim and Arab communities, with Muslim culture, via the Islamic objects within their collections. The author emphasises the importance of using well-known methods of public engagement with the Islamic Collections via education and outreach department activities. Therefore, the author would like to recommend that museum staff continue to pay close attention to the regularity of these activities, the age groups they are suitable for and the locations where they are held

because all these factors can increase or decrease the accessibility of the Islamic collections in question.

5.3 Categorisation and Archiving in Museums

This about categorisation and archiving debate focuses on, among other things, the representation of intellectual accessibility regarding the basic understanding of religion and culture in collections. This is discussed in further depth in the opening chapter where Rye mentions that religion and culture cannot be considered as separate when looking at the way they are laid out in today's structure of society. However, when looking at museum objects, there is more of a debate as to whether objects can be seen solely for the cultural/religious aspect and if there should be a distinction when presenting objects.

The 'Museum Categorisation and Archive debate' is about how museums go about categorising and archiving objects and collections. There is much debate on whether there should be a universal method on how to do this. There is further discussion in the literature regarding the consequences of overlooking the nuances of collections when categorising them, leading to them being disregarded. The Museums Association mentions how overall, there has been a shift in how museums categorise and catalogue these objects but there needs to be more of awareness of their social value to visitors attending (Museums Association 2005). This research is about how to improve visitor engagement with Islamic collections, and this is an important perspective to look at things from, as many of the topics discussed with the public and staff members fall under this category.

One of the first points that was addressed in my research of the literature regarding this debate is the professional responsibility museum staff hold when categorising and archiving objects. It can be a difficult task, especially when approaching ethnographic collections like

Islamic collections. Hooper-Greenhill discusses methods for museums to show their commitment to their professional responsibility such "such as more "visitor-orientated and visitor-engaging activities" which "provide the possibility of individually tailored visitor experiences." and "are not tied down in their interpretative strategies by objects" (Hooper-Greenhill 1997). There is an impact on the public as well as the staff when categorisation is done incorrectly, for example when objects are labelled as Islamic, but without stating the source of this information. There are two objects in the PRM online collection database identified as 'Amulets' which demonstrate this issue of a lack of information sources. See the PRM website and search for items numbered 1980.11.1 and 2002.51.1. This changes the way we think about categorisation and how it can influence the narrative of objects and collections because visitors will interpret the objects according to how they are displayed.

It can be concluded from the findings that Islamic objects make Muslims feel that their heritage is important and is valued in the context of a science museum, as the visitors make connections with the History of Science Museum through the artifacts which the museum hold. This is essential to consider when approaching this debate as there are so many valid perspectives to consider when aiming to categorise and archive ethically and sensitively. It also raises a question about whether there is a right way and whether there will inevitably be a group of visitors who will always feel less connected to Islamic Collections. This is also discussed in Theme One of this discussion, but under the museum categorisation and archive debate, there are a whole new set of factors to consider, as discussed above and further on in this chapter.

Visiting the two museums has been a passive experience for the general public and has been in the past limited to a mere inspection of the exhibits, whereby the visitors are unable to interact with the museum's objects. Hence in recent years, museum education has witnessed a shift of interest from the 'conventional didactic' methods towards learning models requiring

the active participation of visitors with the objects as part of modern learning styles (Kelly 2007). Likewise, UK governmental policy has recognized the growing role of museums in education and in delivering the learning process to the broadest possible range of demographic groups (Black 2005: 124). This, in turn, has given rise to the scholarly debate about the most relevant learning theories that can account for museum learning (Shabi: 2015). Museum education is very influential, especially the introduction of more active methods because it changes both visitor and staff perceptions of it what it means to connect and interact with collections. These shifts need to be considered when approaching these debates, as the museum field is continuously changing, along with people and society. Most education departments at museums such as Ashmolean, HSM and PRM which present artefacts and have objects related to Islamic history have replicas of some objects. These objects are presented in such a way that they look very similar to the original art pieces. However, people who are more connected with the religion have stated that the replicated versions of historical objects do not create the aura which can be felt from the original artefacts (Atakuman: 2008: 214). In this regard, the author knows, through working alongside the education officers at both museums, that the description of such objects is necessary so that the right information can be offered in terms of providing education to people who want to develop an in-depth knowledge of Islamic artefacts.

Working with Islamic collections often requires the staff members to be comfortable working with the community from the same background. This is a topic discussed in the literature as “Community and diversity is a major area of interest within the field of museum’s role because it can be a place to help “shape community identity and bring different community groups together, a catalyst for regeneration through the creation of new venues and civic spaces, and a resource" (Museum Association report, 2010).” It is suggested that to fulfil the role of the museum, staff members should feel comfortable working with communities from

the same background. This is very important as it influences how we think about collaborative work within the museum sector because it highlights how valuable it is to have first-hand insight from origin communities.

The methods used when these communities work alongside the museum could make a difference to the outcome. If these communities feel like their ideas and knowledge are equally as valuable as those of the museum staff, it can reflect in the way they interact with this display. Their culture could be seen from more of a 'common humanity' perspective, rather than as an object of wonder, which could connect them with visitors and communities who respond to this new perspective.

Working with any type of collection requires the staff member to feel comfortable and interested enough to be able to produce the best outcome for the display and for any activities. Islamic collections often require specialised knowledge and understanding of the objects, and as discussed by Len Pole, the more comfortable and engaged the staff members are, the better and more accessible these displays will be. Len Pole debates this topic by using the example of 18th and 19th century trading habits leading to misunderstood objects being displayed in a misunderstood way (Pole 1993). This is an important insight because it highlights that the accessibility of collections is a product of the environment staff members are working in.

The comfort of staff members and a general awareness of possible sensitivities to the collections they curate, the author argues, makes the collections more accessible for the source communities. This could be because it allows the communities to feel fairly and accurately reflected in the displays and more interconnected with the rest of the museum which reduces a sense of alienation.

5.4 The Authority of Museums

As explained briefly in the Introduction, this theme discusses what type of authority museums should project and how different groups of people believe this should be done. Here the author will discuss the answers to questions related to this theme and compare the opinions of the different groups that were involved in the research. Before going into the discussion, the author will define what is meant by the authority of museum directorates and trustees. According to the literature, the power of museum directorates and trustees refers to the "organization, function and status, largely in response to a changing external environment" (Lawley, 2003). This is relevant because it emphasises that museums have to be pragmatic with their authority and adjust it as society changes. This again confirms that museums are no longer to be regarded as purely dogmatic and out of touch authorities within society because there is evidence that they are becoming more immersed in the changes occurring in today's society, and they can even be considered as part of these changes.

It has been established in earlier chapters that lack of background knowledge of their Islamic collections will undermine the authority of UK museums. As explained in the first two themes, the majority of the staff from HSM and PRM answered the research questionnaires that 'at least a good understanding' is needed to appreciate the exhibition of Islamic objects. However, the author is arguing that just 'a good understanding' would not be enough to maintain the academic authority of the museum or justify its funding. Academics such as McClusky have noted that Western training does not provide a good enough background for accurate labelling and curations to occur (Museum Association 2018).

Joint activities between museums are another method of opening up accessibility for visitors. One example is the broad range of Islamic collections found in the Garden, Library, and Museum Oxford University (GLAM). This can be a way to increase visitor engagement, as it widens the context of the collections and makes them come across as less limited and

isolated. Isolation of these collections has been identified as a deterrent for visitors to engage with, sometimes even making the collections come across as intimidating. For example, Patel debates that it is when the term ‘ethnographic’ can be seen as reductive and can isolate the collection from other museum collections. This confirms the vulnerable position that some museums are left in when expressing their authority into society because there are many sensitivities when it comes to using technical museum language to display objects and collections which are not generally understood by an average citizen.

How effectively do museums in the UK explain Islamic culture to their viewers? How do they encourage Muslim visitors to relate to the Islamic collections? The better they do this, the more highly regarded they will be within the Museum and Heritage sectors in the UK and internationally in terms of their ability to interpret their Islamic collections. In order to know how well Muslim visitors, relate to the Islamic collections the information held in the museums’ archives and documentation databases needs to be expanded and updated to include regular information from general 'visitor evaluations/surveys’ including specific information on their interest in the Islamic objects. In this regard, the community expertise and understanding of artefacts is necessary for people who belong to the same culture or environment as the object (Morrow: 2008: 49).

The author strongly recommends that when presenting an object associated with Islamic history, the demonstrator should have a clear understanding of what they show and how they present the object in the presence of the audience. If a curator of Islamic collections does not have an excellent understanding of Islam and Islamic culture before working with a collection of this type, then they should obtain greater insight and knowledge of Islam through working alongside their Muslim colleagues and with local Muslim communities. In the same way, to manage Islamic material, it is essential to have good collection management skills, knowledge

of materials, storage, handling, conservation etc to ensure preservation of the objects. The Conservator HSM, checks "for any specific uses for the object in questions and how that may affect my work" and after doing so "I am quite happy to work on these objects." There seems to be a pattern based on already acquired knowledge of the Islamic world and collections – the more prior knowledge, the higher the comfort level of the staff member. The author would like to see the majority of staff members increasing their comfort level by gaining more knowledge of the Islamic world via the different ways available in British communities such as books, the life stories of immigrants and most importantly engaging with the Muslim community.

According to Hooper-Greenhill (1992) basic 'knowledge' about a museum's collection is necessary in order to understand what is kept in that museum and for what purpose. She also states that new "knowledge" about the collections is created through partnership with local communities. When considering the Islamic objects, the role of the curators is important in bringing the right historical knowledge of the object to the museum (Ali, Amin & Cobanoglu: 2016: 449). This is acknowledged by the staff members interviewed and surveyed by the author, as there is a constant reiteration that any staff members involved with Islamic collections need to have at least a solid understanding of the interpretation which the museums are trying to present, as well as having factual knowledge about the history surrounding the objects.

To conclude this section of the discussion, examining the 'Authority of UK Museums' reveals a lot in terms of answering the thesis question. When it comes to Islamic Collections, the author demonstrates that the authority of the museums can be increased by bringing together the museums and the communities who share the same origin as the collections in order to enhance knowledge within the museum staff. When answering the thesis question, the author emphasises that it is important to remember that collection accessibility is not just a

problem for visitors who are unfamiliar with the culture, but also for visitors who may feel alienated from their own culture due to ambiguous and unclear representation in both museums, the PRM in particular. Islamic Collection accessibility and the authority of the UK museums such as PRM and HSM go hand in hand. The higher the level of effectiveness and the more skilful the methods by which they exert this authority, as discussed in this theme, the more both museums will become positive platforms to discuss issues which lead to Islamophobia in a professional and friendly way and bring people together.

5.5 What is Islamophobia and how has it affected Visitor Interactions with Islamic Collections?

Islamophobia is discussed and explored in section 1.3.4. To refresh the reader's mind, Islamophobia "is the irrational prejudice against Islam and Muslims, frequently as a political force (Open Society Foundations 2019)." The section discussed the role museums have to play in combating this type of discrimination within society, and museum projects put into action in the UK with the aim of shedding light on complex issues such as islamophobia and to allow Islam to be explored through culturally sensitive perspectives are debated further in the review (Museum Association 2015). In terms of answering the thesis question regarding increasing accessibility of Islamic collections, combating hate and discrimination could open up a whole new category of visitors who want to educate themselves on Islam to get rid of any misconceptions they have about the religion.

Both conferences highlighted that the Islamic collections' original message was missing and did not come across. This would make an impact on the visitors' experience of Islamic galleries in museums. The argument is about where museums put their emphasis when displaying Islamic collections, as well as why belief is on the sidelines of these collections (Ali,

Amin & Cobanoglu: 2016: 449). Moreover, the overarching concern mentioned above is what this research work is trying to engage with. Further research is needed to investigate how museums engage with their Islamic materials and what they do with them, and in particular how museums catalogue, archive and categorise them in a way that emphasises how the object represents mainstream Islam and its core beliefs and what it regards as most important (Ali, Amin & Cobanoglu: 2016: 449).

Looking at the different approaches used in both HSM and PRM, while both museums wish to engage their visitors with their Islamic collections, and both created individual projects related to Islamic scientific objects at HSM and the Islamic collection at PRM, they have significant differences. In PRM, the stories and descriptions are not necessarily religious but still offer another perspective through human background stories. The stories and the descriptions which have been added to the actual artefacts are essential to building a stronger understanding of the objects. Whereas in HSM, the stories and descriptions focus equally on the Islamic and non-Islamic aspects of the objects, because they already clearly distinguish the objects inside their galleries as Islamic or non-Islamic, for example they identify astrolabes as either Islamic or non-Islamic.

Turning now to discuss the wider issue of how Islamic Collections combat Islamophobia in the UK, Venetia Porter, Curator of Islamic and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art at the British Museum and Rebecca Bridgman, Curator of Islamic and South Asian Art at Manchester Museum, speaking at two recent conferences on the objectives of Islamic collections: “Power and Protection, Islamic Art and the Supernatural” and “From Malacca to Manchester: Curating Islamic collections worldwide” concluded that essential work is needed to make Islamic collections more accessible to their audiences (unpublished papers from conference proceedings). Venetia Porter also said, when discussing the Albukhary Foundation

Gallery of the Islamic world “The activities of Islamic State are utterly deplorable but cannot be attributed in a generalised way to people of the Muslim faith. We hope that this gallery, placed right at the heart of the museum, will demonstrate how all our cultures interconnect.” (Harris, 2015). Likewise, in a New York Times article, Mark Jones, the director of the V&A, was quoted as saying: “We want to undermine negative attitudes that people bring with them. It is absurd for some people to claim that Islamic culture is a barbaric culture. If you see what there is here [in the V&A], you can't possibly think it is hostile to beauty or education and has no intellectual tradition” (Weeks, 2006). These public statements, by senior museum staff addressing Islamophobia and the role which museums can play in counteracting it, help to create a positive atmosphere about Islam in general in the UK.

To summarise, the HSM director Dr Silke Ackermann’s claims in her interview about empowering “young people to proudly speak about their origin without immediately being put into a kind of almost ISIS label” reveal the overlap between the role of the museum as a place of learning and combating Islamophobia. This strengthens claims by Hooper-Greenhill, Taylor and Whitehead and others that museums have become an integral part of society and should act responsibly.

5.6 Conclusion

Within this conclusion the author will highlight the major points brought up in each theme mentioned in this discussion. Starting with theme 1, the role of the museums as communicators, there is a large discussion about the display and labels of Islamic collections. Nicholas Thomas, Director of the Museum Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University discusses how labels and collections do not tell a story, which acts as a barrier between visitors and fully understanding Islamic collections. However, Dr Silke Ackermann,

Director of HSM believes that making mistakes with temporary exhibitions is natural as long as these mistakes are learnt from and that this is reflected in the permanent displays. This applies to the improvement of the accessibility, labels and displays of permanent Islamic collections for all intellectual levels and the linking of Islamic collections to other collections around the museums. Criticism should be accepted and taken into account with an open mind from both staff and visitors, as Islamic collections are still in development and many of the front of house staff members feel like they do not know enough about the collections and this acts like a barrier for full understanding of the Islamic collections and for full use of the collections. This theme also discusses visibility of Islamic collections and why Islamic collections should be highlighted, as the Islamic collections are relatively small compared to the bigger European collections, therefore sometimes they are overlooked. This also links with the correlation of the name of the museum and what type of content visitors are expecting to see. For example, when visiting the History of Science Museum visitors may not be interested in seeing religion related objects, but this could be a great opportunity to talk about religion through science and attract a whole new demographic of visitors to collections they may not initially be interested in. This also is talked about in relation to Islamophobia as it could open up a new perspective of understanding Islam which a lot of people would not have thought of. To conclude, in terms of answering the thesis question of how to make Islamic Collections more accessible to the UK public, the discussion in theme one 'The Role of Museums as Places of Learning' has unveiled a range of different approaches which allow museums to excel at filling the 'Educator' role in society. These ranged from practical ideas about the collection layouts and suggested improvements to more subjective opinions on theories and activities to do with Islamic Collections. When it comes to discussing what all these opinions reveal in terms of answering the question, it is that there are still barriers in place preventing full

accessibility to the Islamic collections for both staff and visitors. Based on the research and feedback from staff and visitors these barriers are being worked on, however there does not seem to be enough of a continuous conversation between staff members and between staff and the public to be able to effectively improve over a short space of time. It seems that the efforts to improve the 'Communicator' role are fragmented and there is a lack of cohesiveness between the improvements that may make them less effective.

Regarding theme 2, the categorisation and archive debate, the professional responsibility to categorise the collections and have knowledge gained from the source communities is heavily discussed. The Multaka project allows staff members to work with members of these communities who would like to volunteer their time to become guides and also to assist with the clear categorisation of Islamic objects. This benefits both the museum staff as well as the source communities. The discussion emphasises that when the source communities are consulted, the 'true' meaning of Islam is captured and there are no misrepresentations of the collections. The question of who should lead the refreshed displays is also discussed and most staff members believe it should be led by someone who has a deeper understanding of Islam and the Islamic collections. This is because such a person would be better at checking references and writing accurate labels. This would also allow for distinctions such as whether an object is Islamic and Muslim or just Islamic in terms of culture to be made, as some of these distinctions would not be obvious to an untrained eye. In terms of refreshing displays, it was noted by many staff members that labels need to be less text heavy and need to be updated to be more modern, such as using touch screens to increase accessibility. This again requires someone to understand what Islamic collections need in terms of being best presented in a new digital method without losing their value in the new display setting. To conclude, the 'Categorisation and Archiving in Museums - How should museums do it?' is more of a

specialist theme in terms of weaving in findings from the research. It takes things in from a much more academic perspective and intertwines them more directly with the literature rather than public opinion. When looking at this theme in relation to answering the thesis question, it reveals more about shortcomings within the two museums' internal systems rather than problems with the public-facing side of the museums. In terms of this debate, firstly the level of knowledge of the Islamic Collections of the staff comes into focus, as they are the ones presenting the collections to the public, and secondly, whether there needs to be a minimum amount of knowledge attained before handling these collections. The institutions and the staff should be looked at separately, however, they are closely related because the museums' policies and their rules affect the way the staff look at the Islamic Collections and eventually affect how they categorise and archive them in both museums.

Themes 3 and 4, examining the authority of UK museums, discuss the use of museums as a social platform to address issues such as Islamophobia. However, they also discuss that only having a basic understanding of Islamic collections does not necessarily mean that museums have authority to add to the narrative about issues around Islam and Islamic objects. There is discussion about the awareness of what level of knowledge of Islamic collections museums have and what they can do with that in terms of exercising their authority. It could be that they could use this authority to help Islamic collections to be presented more accurately and therefore in a more relevant way. The example of the ongoing debate in Museum Studies in academia on decolonisation and how that fits in with the narrative of Islamic objects in current displays also relates to the de-stereotyping debate. The discussion also touches upon the culture vs religion debate and how the authority of museums can change the way Islamic collections are viewed in that sense. This is where reference checking is very important as museums are trusted sources of information due to their authority, so they have the responsibility to provide

accurate information. Staff diversity quotas were also discussed and Dr Silke Ackermann believes that hiring candidates because of their race and not for their skills is unethical and could be seen as an abuse of museum authorities that they have been granted.

The author's point of view is that this could allow visitors who have no previous familiarity with Islam to clear up misconceptions, which would help tackle any Islamophobia, and further highlight the museum's role as a platform and communicator in relevant modern-day issues. This overall could make the museums more relevant within Oxford and enhance visitor numbers. This changes how we think about museums because it removes it from the older identity that museums are rigid and display the same collections all the time. Instead, it introduces a new, more flexible identity to museums which could encourage more visitors to visit on a regular basis.

Chapter VI: Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to investigate the accessibility of Islamic collections to their audiences in UK museums and the relationship between the display methods used by museums and visitor engagement. The author chose two different museums based in the UK, History of Science Museum (HSM) and Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM), as case studies. Both museums are based in Oxford, and they are part of the Gardens, Libraries and Museums of the University of Oxford (GLAM). The research work started in 2015 and is a part-time study, undertaken over four years via distance learning. The active research took place in 2017- 18, then the author took a two-year break in 2018 and 2019. It was decided that, in order to achieve a good understanding of the subject, it would be necessary to investigate each museum collection's

archive and online collection, and to go over their guidelines for characterisation and accessibility.

As a case study, the research used a qualitative and quantitative mixed method, attempting to discern the similarities and differences between the accessibility of the Islamic collections in each museum. The case study included questionnaires, given to a wide range of museum staff with a variety of roles in both museums, and interviews with the directors and other members of staff of both museums. Questionnaires were also given to visitors who visited each museum.

Throughout the entire period of study, both museums were observed from a viewpoint that their respective Islamic collections/objects were not as accessible as they could be. In general, most of the interviewees, staff and visitors who took the questionnaire recognised this. Dr Silke Ackermann categorised the exhibitions as being constantly updated and worked on following feedback. Many staff members and visitors noted that the displays and labels "were not clear enough" and too "word heavy". PRM has a typological display, so the results from their staff and visitor feedback reflected this by rejecting the idea of having a single case dedicated to Islamic objects. In contrast, visitors and staff from HSM mentioned the display mechanism in terms of labels, placement of Islamic collections in the museum and connections to other displays in the museum. However, when looking at staff feedback from both museums, there was a consensus that there could be more training so staff can interact with Islamic collections more constructively. In the directors' interviews, they frequently used words such as "more development" and "trial and error". When comparing PRM and HSM visitors, there was a similar feeling that visitors were not visiting the museums to specifically see Islamic collections or objects, which was reflected in the questionnaire data collected.

The research topic is not explicitly discussed much in the literature, which is why the author recognised a gap that could be filled. This research has been done to get the answer to these very important questions: 'What is the relationship of Muslim audiences to Islamic collections?', 'What are the elements of Islamic culture?', 'What role is played by the visitors when they visit a museum? The strong relationship which has been seen in the museums between the Islamic objects and the audiences is the area that is explored in relation to the research questions asked in this study.

On the basis of this study alone, it is difficult to be certain about the factors accounting for the lack of accessibility of Islamic collections. We learn that there needs to be more research into Islamic collections in different museum settings across the UK, to add more data to the debate. For example, museums which have a permanent Islamic display, museums which have Islamic objects mixed in with other collections, or even in online collections and exhibitions. The author highly recommends that more academics and museum professionals from the same background as the Islamic collections should be more aware about museums around them who may need regular consultations. Engaging with local communities from the same background as the objects in the Islamic collections to enrich and enhance the collection categorisation database should also be encouraged. This study is a starting point to investigate further museums from a similar viewpoint. This is because this study focuses on just two museums out of many in the UK and these two museums are in very similar locations. As noted above, the accessibility debate has focused on similar methods of increasing accessibility such as using clearer labels. However, subtle and clear signs exist that suggest it is more than just the methods of display, but more the attitude and understanding of Islamic collections by staff and visitors. This means museums need to be more flexible, open minded, and creative on how to engage visitors with religious collections like the Islamic collection.

There is a problem around Islamophobia in the UK and unfortunately it is still a common issue in social media, national news and newspapers, which affects both British and non-British communities. Therefore, museums can be a positive platform to bring people together, using their collections to discuss such a prevalent sensitive issue, like Islamophobia. Ultimately, this will give a chance for visitors to access the collections through a positive and friendly debate, hosted by a museum platform. This will also encourage new demographics within the audience, such as refugees, asylum seekers and forced immigrants to come to museums and engage with British culture through the collections, which encourage integration into society. The author highly recommends to the museum community to search for and engage with their local communities coming from the same backgrounds as their collections. Doing so will enrich the museum collection stories and discover hidden exciting facts about some of their artefacts.

The use of museums as positive platforms of authority to combat Islamophobia was recommended by the directors of HSM and PRM and is a relevant dialogue that goes alongside any discussion to do with Islamic collection accessibility, by creating workshops, lectures and events led by the directors. For instance, the recent project, Multaka (meeting point), is a good initial attempt. However, the author recommends having continuous projects like this over a long period of time instead of on a short-term basis, because this could create another gap in museum practise, as previous research and development becomes less relevant as time goes on due to the change of management, senior staff, and museum priorities. The recruitment system for temporary part time jobs is unstable in the museum sector and that is due to short term grants for new projects. Staff feel more stable with permanent jobs; therefore, the museum is not their priority jobs, so even with a constant effort being made to push new projects forward, it is usually not enough. By having gaps between grants, staff tend to lose their interest

and motivation and find other ways to flourish in their career paths. This leads to the discussion of the categorisation and archive debate about whether there should be a distinction between culture and religion when categorising objects. This could be beneficial for both visitors and staff members, especially as it enhances staff knowledge of Islamic collections and how to interact with them.

The author recommends carrying on enriching collection information by having specialised consultants related to the Islamic collections. It has been recommended to make and develop exhibitions which would attract a new and wider audience to expand the message of religion and Islamic practice. This research will play an important part in understanding the role of Islamic knowledge when trying to make Islamic collections more accessible. This explores the level at which Islamic collections are accessible to non-Muslims and helps pin-point why they may not be as easy to engage with as other collections. This could then lead to a framework of guidance being developed and used by the UK museum community when displaying Islamic collections.

Research by Hooper-Greenhill (1998) indicates that there are more subjective factors to be considered such as the categorisation debate and whether there needs to be a structured method. Hooper-Greenhill (1992) also acknowledges the societal pressures that may influence visitor expectations of Islamic collections due to the growing "pressure for minority groups to receive recognition". Rye (2017) builds upon this with his research where he focuses on "popular culture" or "mass culture" and the role of these in the accessibility of Islamic collections. The research findings show that Islamic collections in HSM are perceived as only scientific objects and visitors come to see the science behind the collections. In PRM, visitors come and view the ethnographic collections as a whole and the Islamic collections are part of this. Therefore, the name of the museum is the initial way to attract visitors. This research

shows that museum titles is one of the main things that attract visitors from all over the world and provides a clear idea what to expect to see in the museum, such as HSM. On the other hand, PRM has a more ambiguous title, so visitors are unclear on what to expect to see in the museum. Therefore, the author believes that a museum title can act as a 'Cabinet of Curiosity'.

Previous studies (McClusky, 2011; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Constantine, 2014), concluded that there were multiple ways to make minority collections more accessible, from working with the community of origin, upgrading collections with help from people across all age demographics, to studying the social science side of museum-visitor interactions which is often mirrored in the type of society and culture the visitors are used to. Samuel (2000) acknowledges this viewpoint and discusses this in the 'A Museums is its People' chapter of the discussion. Samuel states that museums are one of the key methods to engaging the Western world with distinct cultures through their materials, to clarify their identity. This research finds that Muslim artefacts are a crucial way through which visitors would clarify Islamophobic misconceptions as well as understand the real history regarding Islam and the work Muslim scholars and ancient people have done.

Pole's (1993) theory of 'Cabinets of Curiosity' predicted the disconnection between non-Muslim visitors and Islamic collections. To remind the reader, 'Cabinets of Curiosity' were individual cases in museums where foreign objects were placed. However, more recently this term has been used in a more positive light to display personal items in a personal collection. Therefore, this theory could be considered outdated and no longer a debate that dominates the literature when talking about museum categorisation and archiving.

Although this research focused on two case studies alongside each other, they do not differ from each other in terms of categorisation, documentation and display of the Islamic

collections. Their audiences are different however, each museum has a different set of visitors according to the museum collections information. The author learnt from staff and visitors' surveys that each museum has their own policies effecting staff work, and they have their own regular visitors attracted by the highlighted objects and so the results cannot provide a sound basis for commenting on the level of accessibility of Islamic collections across the entire UK. This study (and other case studies with comparable findings) would suggest that the UK museum community is constantly learning and becoming more aware of the challenges that come with trying to improve the accessibility of more specialised Islamic collections. Additional research seems needed into the principal expectations of the public and staff when displaying Islamic collections in the UK. As noted above, methods may be in development and awareness is increasing but there is a lack of consistency when Islamic collections do not form a core part of a museum's work.

Another point that this thesis discusses and recommends is staff transparency when it comes to not having sufficient knowledge or insight into Islam as a religion, covering denominations within this religion and other important aspects of Islamic collections in order to display objects effectively. Also, how to distinguish between cultural, ritual and religious objects. Although some museum staff have high levels of knowledge when it comes to the history of Islam, a subjective viewpoint is needed to capture the full meanings of objects. By subjective, the author means consulting people from the same faith who are active in their practice and are immersed in both UK and origin cultures. These people could be external consultants or internal employees. This could apply to every collection which originates from elsewhere in the world. It has already been discussed that collaboration with local communities is a strategy, however the author suggests that there could be official guidelines in place to make museum staff aware that they have these options. This would be considered as going

beyond expectations by the visitors, and may attract more people to the exhibitions, as it feels like more of an effort has been made to connect visitors to collections. The author has been involved with a programme delivered by the Musuem Association UK called 'Transformers Diversity Programme 2017' for one year. This gave the author space to reinforce her identity as an Iraqi-British Muslim person working professionally in the museum sector for over 20 years. This programme allowed the author to empower their ideas and thoughts to challenge the museum sector and the author has continued taking part as a 'Change-Maker'. In order to continue 'Change-making', the museum needs to have a continuous programme led by professional staff – this will happen when a museum has a long-term grant. It is highly recommended that in order to be successful at making Islamic collections accessible museums need to have a long-term plan to embed this change correctly and efficiently with local communities. Changing staff too frequently makes work on these plans unstable because there is no consistent approach to the work, so it becomes more difficult to maintain a consistent approach over time.

The Arabic language often appears on some objects in Islamic collections, and the author believes that there is a lack of analysis of items in UK museums and Islamic collections with inscriptions written in Arabic. Persian, Urdu and Turkish are other languages that often appear on Islamic objects. This is another barrier which the UK museum community need to overcome to increase visitor accessibility. A simple translation of the writing is not always sufficient and can even alienate visitors if there is no context with which to relate it. The author suggests that there should always be a clear transcription of the Arabic, then a clear translation into English as well. The author also recommends that there should be more mainstream Arabic language forums to discuss this or formal academic channels to discuss the whole issue.

This will raise awareness of the issue and add more to an ever-growing protocol when displaying Islamic collections.

Continuous study on this area is essential, especially as new communities are coming to the UK and they should be represented in museums to make them feel welcomed.

This thesis has demonstrated that there is a need for museums and their staff to understand and faithfully represent the religious significance of Islamic collections, but also work must be undertaken to welcome Muslims into museums to interpret Islamic collections and work with museum staff to create interpretation. The author's research findings which have informed the recommendations set out in this thesis could be used to create a working framework for those museums working with Islamic collections, and help develop a common best practice for further museums in the UK.

Appendix A: Data and Figures

Table 1: People involved in the interview

Job Title	MHS	PRM[RI1]
Director	1	1
Head of Research, Teaching and Collections	1	0
Head of education	1	1
Education and community Officer	3	4
Project Curator	0	4
Front of House	7	3
Collection team, OPS Move project ,Researcher	6	2
Conservator	1	0
IT Officer	1	1
Development officer	1	0
Administrator	2	1
HR and Finance	1	0
Total	25	17

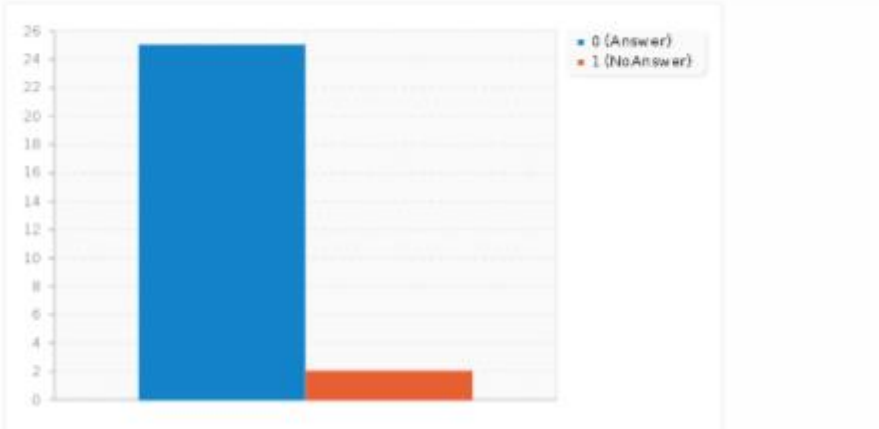
Table 2: Educational and job role of the people involved in the interview analysis

Study and career background	MHS	PRM
PhD	History and Oriental Languages & Cultures	• Museum Studies • MPhil in Material Anthropology and Museum Ethnography 2
Master	• Museum conservation • Philosophy • Classics • History • Arts Management and Policy • Education Postgraduate qualification • Museums/Heritage • Postgraduate historian •	• Museum Studies 3 • Museum Ethnography • Postgraduate degree
BA	• Classical Archaeology and Ancient History 2 • Mathematics 2 • Physics • history of biology • Art degree 2 • Teaching Certificate 2 • computer science • the study of religion • English Literature • History of Science 3 • Conservation and Restoration •	• Visual Arts and Theatre • Archaeology • Classics, • English Lit • Social Anthropology • PGCE 2, adult education teacher 2 • Secondary School English Teacher • History 2 • Ancient History/Museums
Diploma	1	
museum curator	1	
Finance and Administration	4	IT
Museums development	4	• FOH staff member/ volunteer

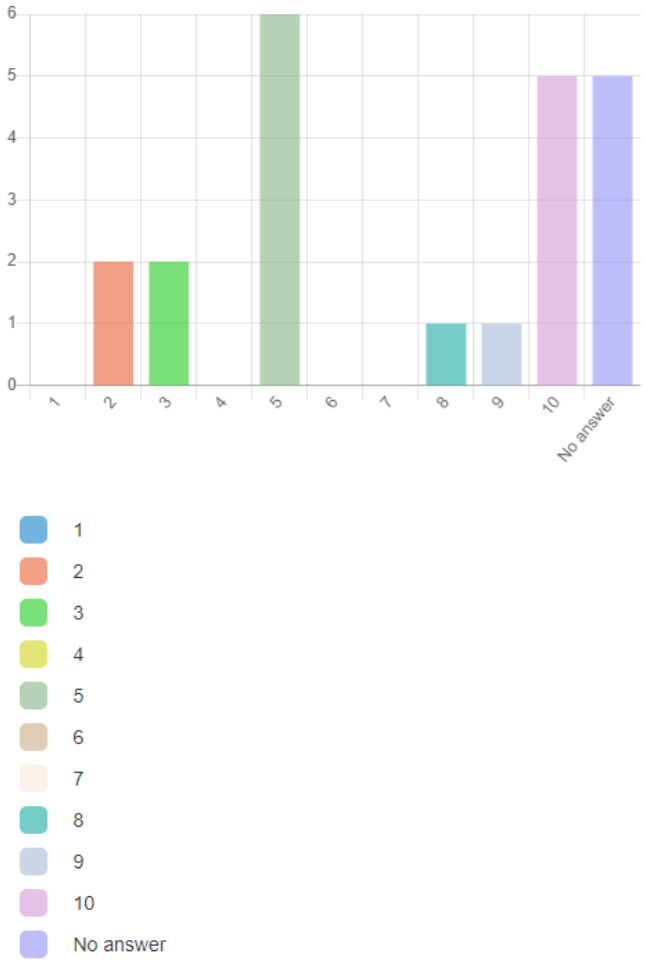
Table 3: Staff questionnaire Figures

3.1 MHS Gallery Staff Survey Statistics

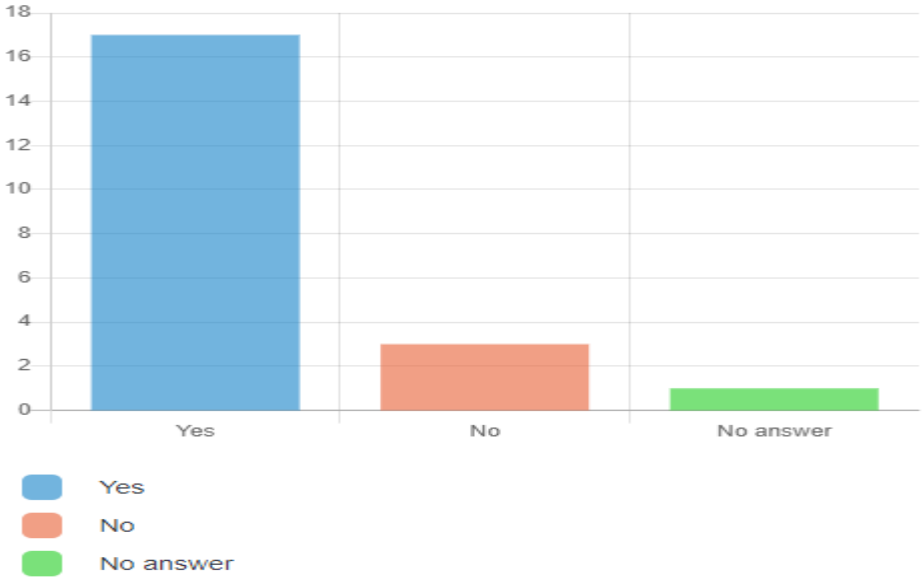
What are your name and your job title, please? What is your career/study background?



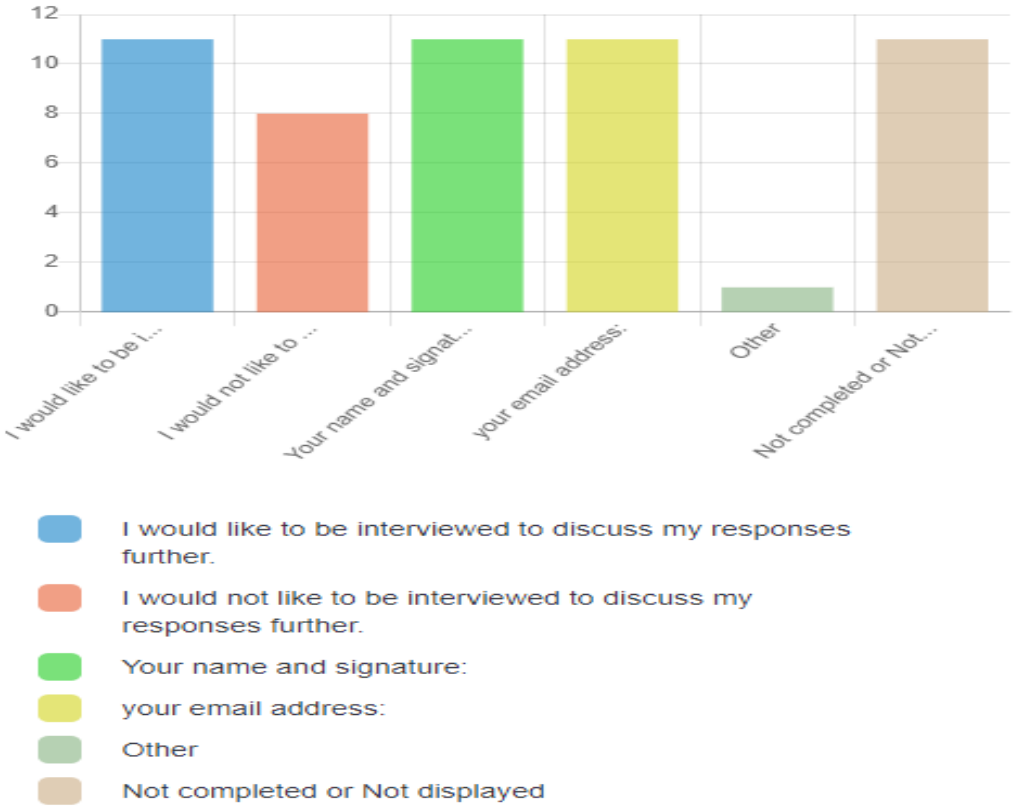
Can you estimate the percentage of repeat visitors to the Museum?



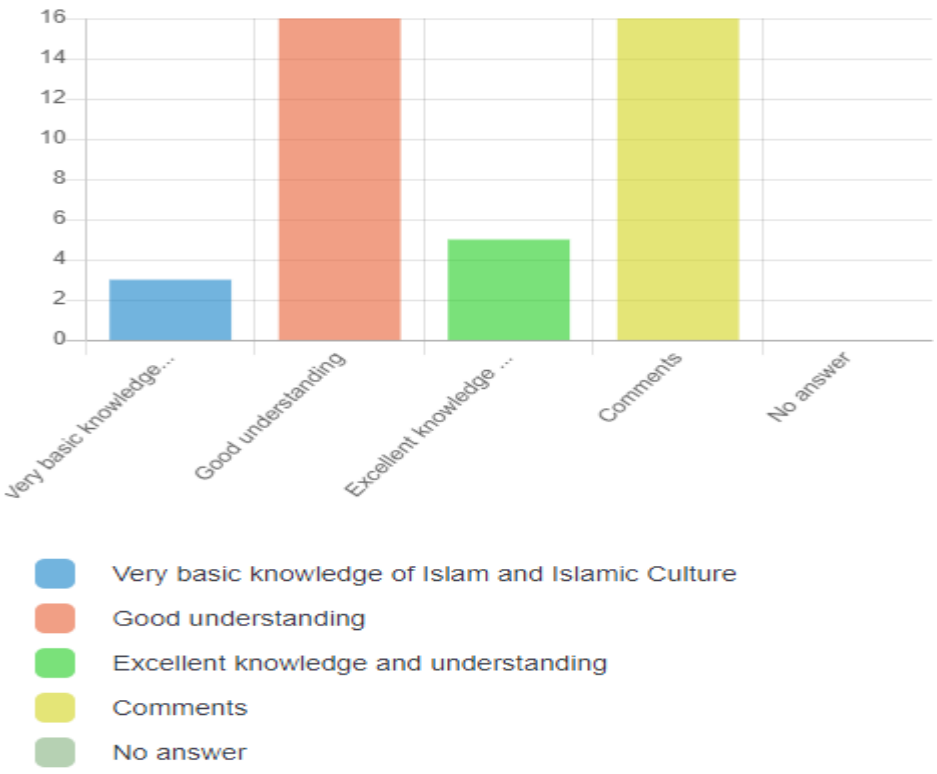
Do you feel comfortable working with these collections? Please explain your answer in the next question.



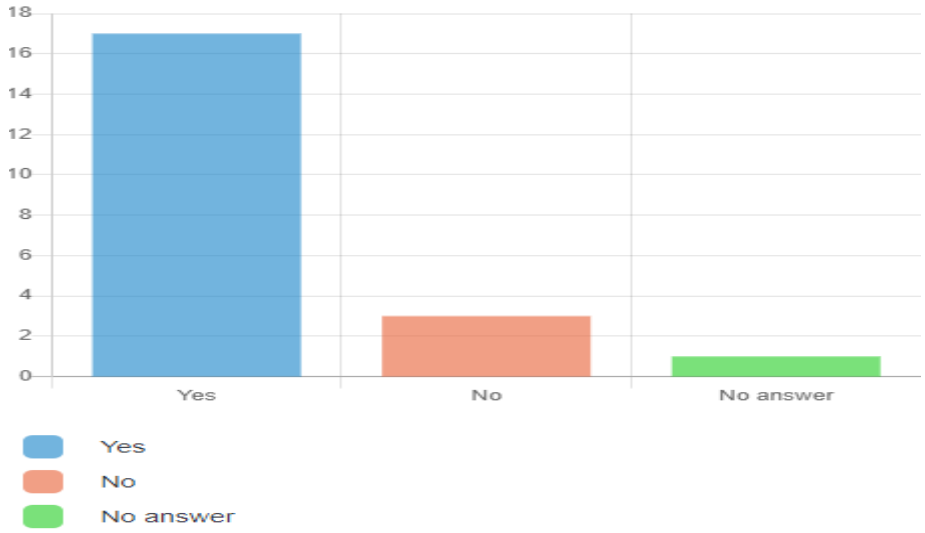
If you are happy for me to interview you to discuss your responses in more detail.



HSM - General knowledge of Islamic collections. In your opinion what kind of knowledge do you need to have to manage/curate/work with these unique/sensitive items?

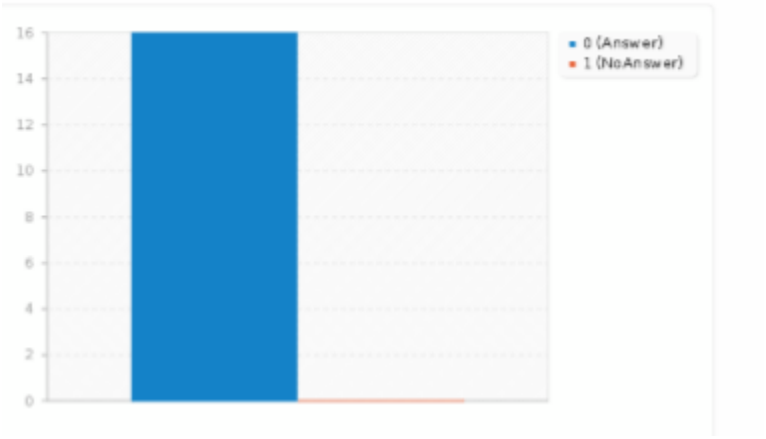


The next question is “Do you feel comfortable working with these collections? Please explain your answer in the next question.”

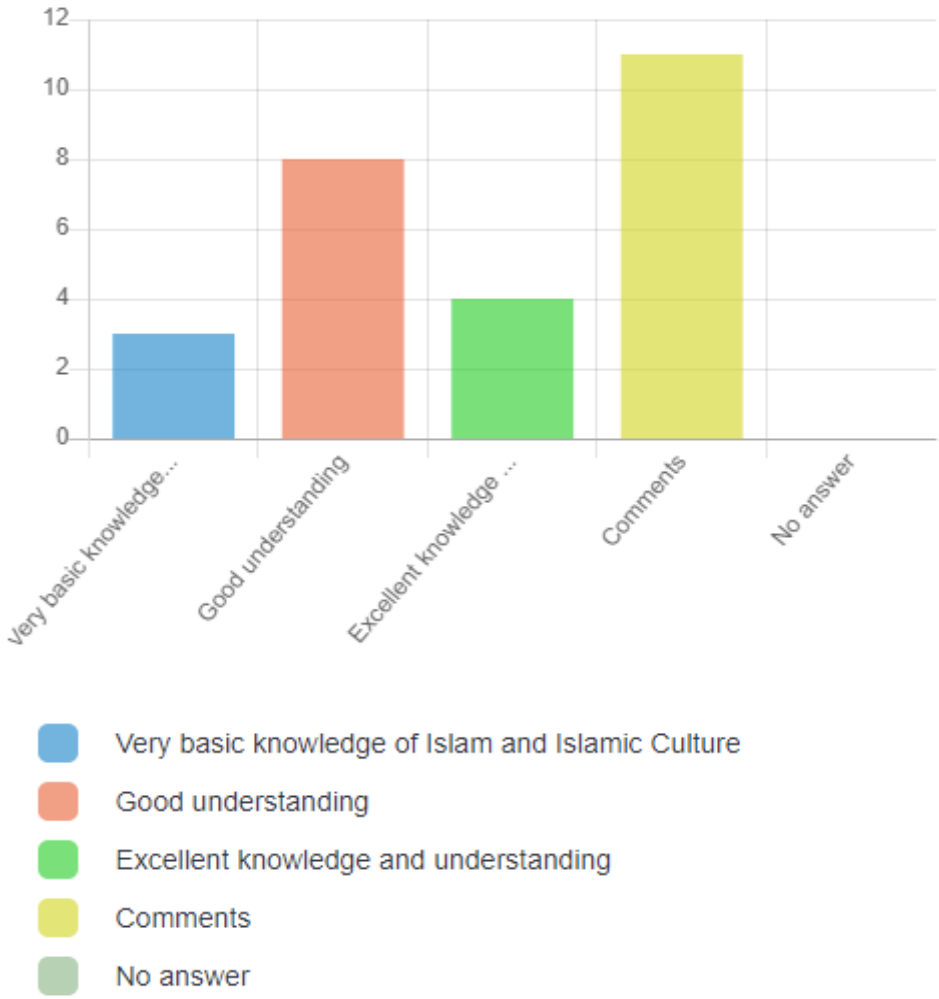


3.2 PRM Gallery Staff Survey Statistics

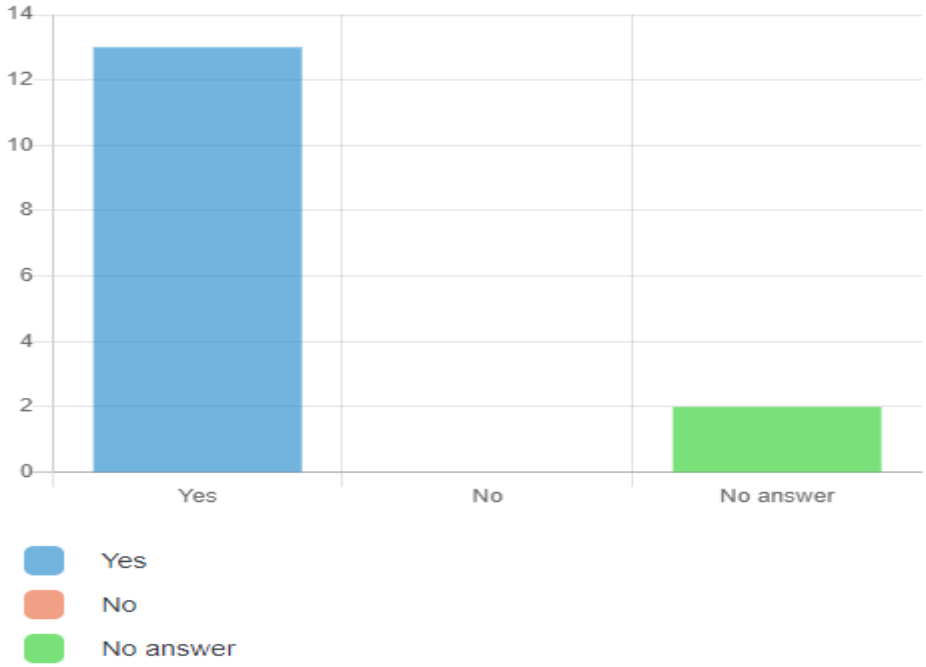
What are your name and your job title, please? What is your career/study background?



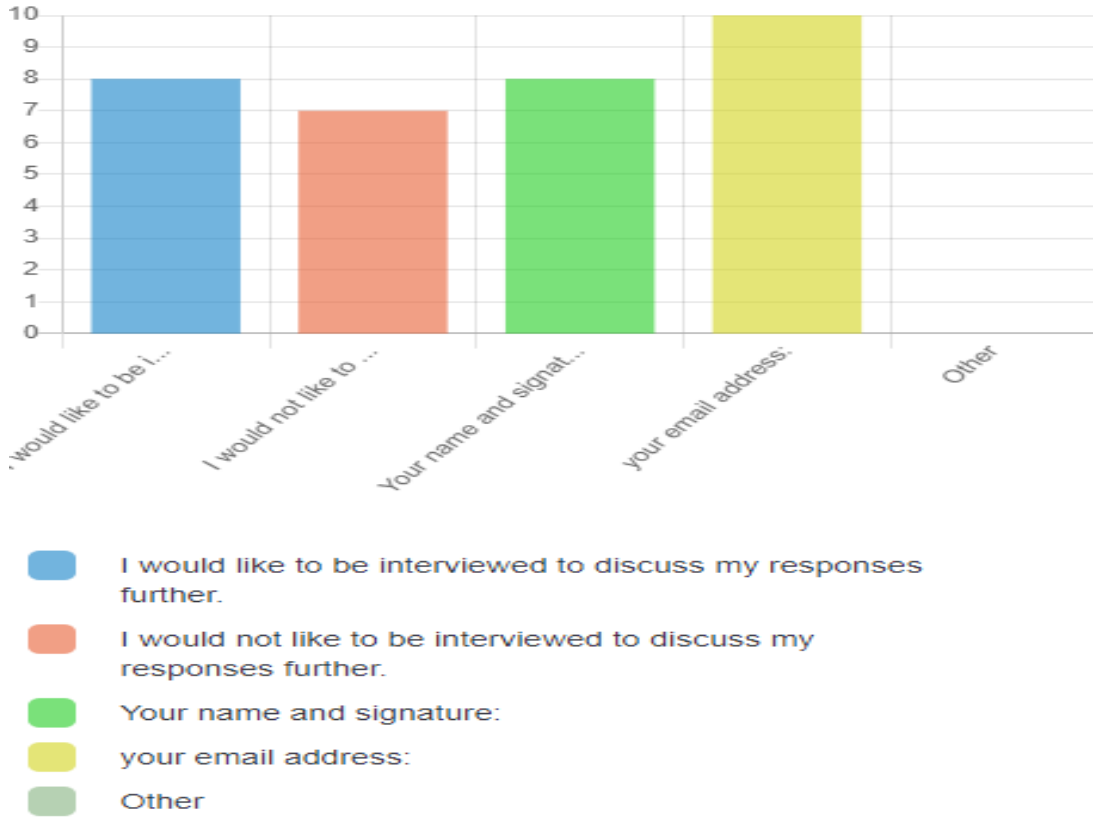
In your opinion what kind of knowledge do you need to have to manage/curate/work with these unique/sensitive items?



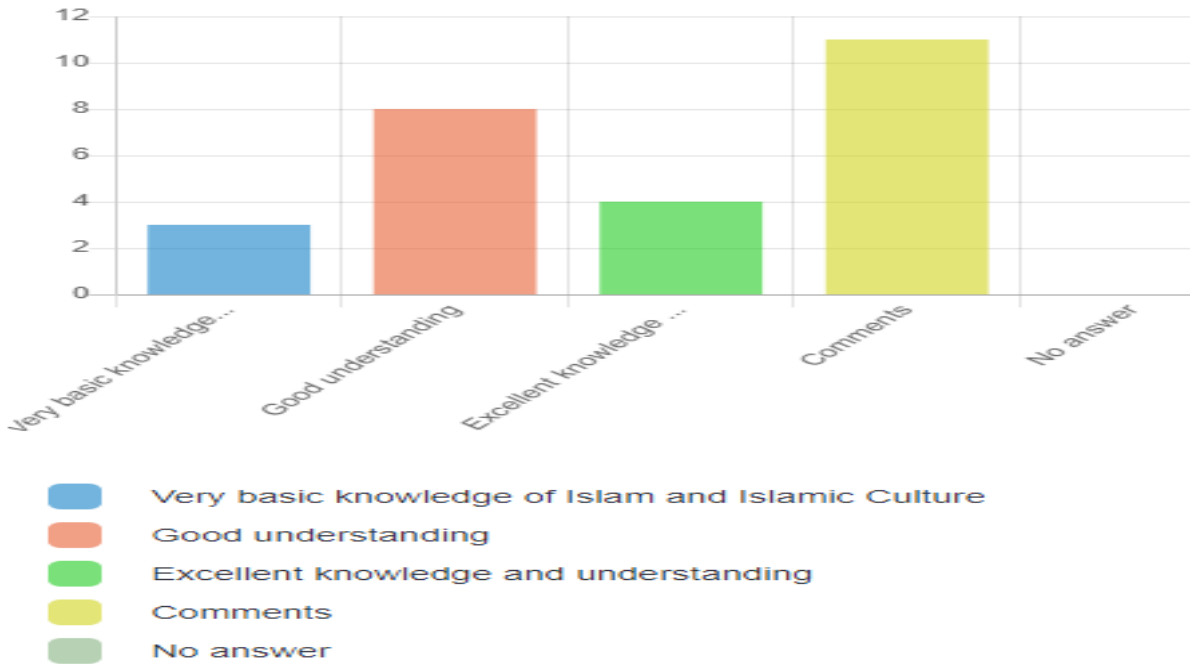
Do you feel comfortable working with these collections? If not, please state why.



If you are happy for me to interview you to discuss your responses in more detail.



PRM - In your opinion what kind of knowledge do you need to have to manage/curate/work with these unique/sensitive items?



For PRM staff answers: "Do you feel comfortable working with these collections? If not, please state why."

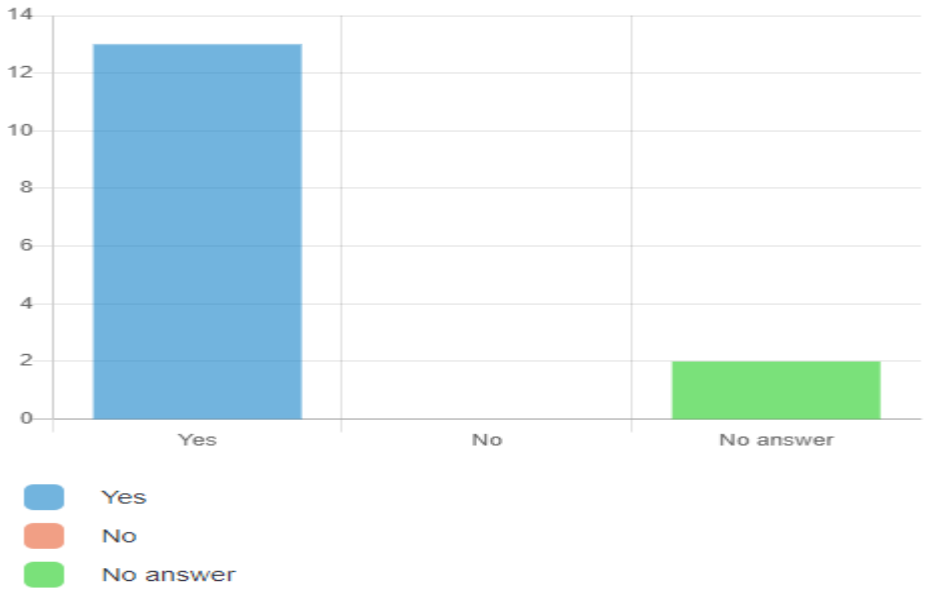


Table Set 4: Visitor Survey tables

‘How would you classify the objects in the following displays under these four options? (Please tick all that apply).

HSM visitor answer table A:

	Tone of collections/objects			
Case name	Superstition	Cultural	Religious	Scientific
Entrance Gallery	5	13	4	29
Top Gallery	9	14	13	28
Basement Gallery	1	6	1	22
Small Gallery (Beeson Room)	6	3	1	16

PRM visitor answer table B:

	Tone of collections/objects			
Case name	Superstition	Cultural	Religious	Scientific
Religious Figures and Artefacts	7	8	10	
Communication and Writing	1	12	4	4
Woodwork		9	5	5
Amulets	9	9	12	1
Metal Armour	1	7	2	5

The visitors were then asked what makes an object “Islamic” and were given options of what might make an object Islamic.

C

	Arabic Writing	Islamic patterns	Calligraphy	General knowledge	Seen it before	Other
PRM	10	11	11	4	1	3
HSM	18	16	6	11	4	3

The penultimate question asks the visitors who they think made these Islamic objects (e.g., the astrolabes in HSM or textiles in PRM). The answers for both museums are displayed in the table below.

D

	Muslims	Christians	Hindus	Buddhists	Jews	Other
PRM	8	0	0	0	0	4
HSM	22	3	2	0	2	2

E	Number of PRM Visitor applicable to each category	
Ages	16-24	5
	25-34	1
	35-44	1
	45-54	1
	55-64	2
	65-74	3
	75+	0
Ethnicity	White British	9
	White other	3
	Chinese	0
	Asian British	2
	Mixed	0
	Prefer not to say	0
Faith	Christian	3
	Muslim	1
	Buddhist	1
	Hindu	0
	Sikh	0
	Atheist	7
	None applicable	1
	Prefer not to say	0
Previous visits to museum	<6 months	1
	6m-1 year	3
	1-2 years	0
	2-3 years	3
Interest in Islamic collection	General interest	12
	Emotional and Spiritual connection	1

	Community leader	0
	Expert	1

F	Number of HSM Visitors applicable to each category	
Ages	16-24	7
	25-34	7
	35-44	4
	45-54	2
	55-64	6
	65-74	3
	75+	0
Ethnicity	White British	10
	White other	10
	Chinese	1
	Asian British	1
	Mixed	4
	Prefer not to say	3
Faith	Christian	7
	Muslim	1
	Buddhist	0
	Hindu	0
	Sikh	0
	Atheist	10
	None applicable	0
	Prefer not to say	4
Previous visits to museum	<6 months	5
	6m-1 year	2
	1-2 years	0
	2-3 years	1
Interest in Islamic collection	General interest	22
	Emotional and Spiritual connection	1
	Community leader	1
	Expert	0

5: Mission and vision statements

5.1 History of Science Museum

Our vision

Reveal Beauty – Highlight Ingenuity – Inspire Curiosity

Our mission

Explore the connections between people, science, art, and belief.

Give voice to the histories that our collections can tell.

Share the stories of science in Oxford. (History of Science Museum, 2021)

5.2 Pitt Rivers Museum

MISSION STATEMENT To inspire and share knowledge and understanding with global audiences about humanity's many ways of knowing, being, creating and coping in our interconnected worlds by providing a world-leading museum for the cross disciplinary study of humanity through material culture. (Pitt Rivers museum, 2021)

6. Surveys

6.1 Visitor Survey

The questionnaire used in this survey is defined as follows. It includes all the questions which were asked with the curators, the interviewees/audiences and the museum keepers. There is a mass number of collections and a huge range of questions which was helpful in regards to the understanding of Muslim era and its implications. The questions are;

1. Did you intend to see Islamic collections today? (Select all that apply)

Yes □ No □ not sure □

Why?

_____

2. What did you know about Islam before you visited the Museum? (Select all that apply)

Hajj □ Quran □ Fasting (Ramadan) □ Nasheed (Islamic songs) □□

Celebration/Festival (Eid-al-Fitr) □ History of Islam □The Prophet Mohammed □□

Arabic language □ Arabic Songs □ Arabic music □

Halal food □ Mecca □ Yemen □□

London □□

Other (please specify) □ _____

If yes state how did you know?

_____

3. How did you learn about Islam? (Select all that apply)

I am Muslim □ from School □ from Friends/Family □

Travelling abroad □ from museum collections □ News/Media □ Internet □ Other (please specify) □□

4. Are you aware of any museum publications or resources linked to the Islamic collections? Yes □ No □□

5. Would you find a leaflet about the Islamic collections useful?

Very useful □ Quite useful □ Not particularly useful □

Not useful at all □ Not sure □

6. What of the following do you think makes an object Islamic? (Select all that apply)

Arabic language □ Halal foods □ Hijab □ Prayers □□

Mosques □ Who made it □ where it is from □ what it is used for □□

7. ▫What is the written language you will expect to spot on the Islamic objects if any? (Please state) _____

8. Has this visit made you more aware of Islam and the Islamic world in the present time as well as in the past?

Very useful □ Quite useful □ Not particularly useful □ Not useful at all □□

Not sure / don't know □

Please explain your answer below

9. Are you aware of any museum publications or resources linked to the Islamic collections? Yes □ No □□

10. Would you find a leaflet about the Islamic collections useful?

Very useful □ Quite useful □ Not particularly useful □ Not useful at all □□

Not sure / don't know □

11. What of the following do you think makes an object Islamic? (Select all that apply)

Arabic language □ Halal foods □ Hijab □ Prayers □ Mosques □ Who made it □ Where it is from □ What it is used for □□

12. What is the written language you will expect to spot on the Islamic objects if any?

Please state

_____

13. How would you classify the objects in the following displays under these four options? (Please tick all that apply)

Case Name	Superstition	Cultural	Religious	Scientific
Religious Figures and Artefacts				

Communication and Writing				
Woodwork				
Amulets				
Metal armour				

Comments: _____

14. Approximately how long have you spent in the gallery/museum?

Passing through □ 1-5 minutes □ 5-10 minutes □ 10-15 minutes □ More □□

15. Could you see all of the Islamic objects clearly inside the gallery cases?

Yes □ No □ if no why not? _____

16. How easy was it to understand the panels and labels with the objects? Very easy □ Quite easy □ Neither easy nor difficult □ Quite difficult □

Very difficult □□

Please explain your rating

_____

17. If you can, please name one Islamic object from the Museum that represents each option below;

Superstition	Cultural	Religious	Scientific

18. Would you label [name and location of display] _____ as an Islamic display?

Yes □ No □□

19. If you were describing this display of objects to a friend, which three words would you use? (Please circle all that apply)

Bright Useless Exciting Uncomfortable Fun Relevant

Noisy Boring Cheerful Uninteresting Good for Kids

Special Educational Scientific Interesting doesn't relate to me Attractive Hard to understand other (please state……)

20. Could you recognise an Islamic object among other objects without reading its label?

Yes □ No □□

21. What do you think makes a museum object "Islamic"? (Select all that apply)

Arabic writing □ Islamic patterns □ Calligraphy □□

Seen it before □ General knowledge □ Other □□

22. What, if anything, do you find particularly attractive or appealing about this case/display?_

---

23. Has this visit made you more aware of Islam and the Islamic World in the present time as well as in the past?

Very useful □ Quite useful □ Not particularly useful □ Not useful at all □□

Please explain your answer ----------

---

24. Thinking of the objects you have seen; did you think that you were engaging with Islam or the Middle East or Arabic culture? (Select all that apply)

Islamic religion □ Middle East □ Arabic culture □□

25. Who do you think made these Islamic objects, e.g. the astrolabes (MHS) or textile (PRM)? (Select all that apply)_

Muslim □ Christian □ Hindu □□

Someone of no religion □ Buddhist □ Jew □□

26. Do you think museum should do more about the visibility of Islamic collections?

6.2 Visitor Survey 2

1. How many times have you previously visited

[Museum name.....]?

None, this is my first visit □ between 1-5 times □ More than 5 times □□

2. When was the last time you visited?

Within the last 6 months □ in the last 12 months □ within the last 3 years □□

More than 3 years ago □□

3. Which of the following age groups do you belong to?

□ Under 16 □ 16-24

□ 25-34 □ 35-44

□ 45-54 □ 55-64

□ 65-74 □ 75+

4. Would you consider yourself (choose one):

□ A general visitor, wanting to improve your knowledge informally

□ Spiritually or emotionally motivated to visit museums

□ An expert, with in-depth knowledge and wanting to know more

□ An educator/ community leader/ group leader

□ None of the above

5. To which of these ethnic groups do you consider yourself to belong to?

□ White British □ White other

□ Mixed/multiple ethnic background □ Black or Black British

□ Asian or Asian British □ Chinese

□ Prefer not to say □ Other ----------

6. Would you define your religious background as:

□ Agnostic/atheist □ Buddhist

□ Christian □ Hindu

□ Jewish □ Muslim

□ Sikh □ None applicable

□ Prefer not to say

7. Where do you currently live?

Oxford area (include first half of postcode) OX-- ----

Rest of UK (include postcode) ----

Europe ----------

Rest of the world (please state a country)- ----------

7. Interviews

7.1 Schedule for semi-structured interviews (Director and Deputy Director of each museum)

Section A
Questions about the places of origin of Islamic objects in each museum.

Indicative questions:-

1) Which countries do the astrolabes in the Museum of the History of Science come from?

2) Which is the best-known Islamic object in the Pitt Rivers Museum?

Section B
Questions about the challenges of displaying Islamic objects in museums.

Indicative questions:-

1) What do you think about the Islamic objects displays at the Museum of the History of Science (top gallery) now, and what are your future plans?

2) In the Pitt Rivers Museum: would you be interested in having a display specifically of Islamic objects?

Section C
Visitors and their interaction with Islamic objects.

Indicative questions:-

1) For both museums: how do you make your Islamic objects more accessible to visitors from non-Muslim backgrounds?

7.2 Schedule for semi-structured interviews (Museum staff who have consented to be interviewed)

Section A
Questions about the places of origin of Islamic objects in each museum.

Indicative questions:-

1) Which countries do the astrolabes in the Museum of the History of Science come from?

2) Which is the best-known Islamic object in the Pitt Rivers Museum?

3) For both museums: which is your favourite Islamic object, and why?

Section B
Questions about the challenges of displaying Islamic objects in museums.

Indicative questions:-

1) Do visitors find the labels explaining the Islamic objects clear?

2) Who do you think made [any Islamic object, e.g. astrolabe, to be specified in questionnaire] in the Museum?

3) In the Pitt Rivers Museum: would you be interested in having a display specifically of Islamic objects?

Section C
Visitors and their interaction with Islamic objects.

Indicative questions:-

1) For both museums: how do you make your Islamic objects more accessible to visitors from non-Muslim backgrounds?

2) In your opinion, how successful were the family-friendly events held specifically about the Islamic objects?

3) What kind of comments do visitors leave in the ‘Tell us about your visit’ electronic survey?

Appendix B: Ethics Review: ERN_17-1440.

1. Application

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM **APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW**	*OFFICE USE ONLY:* Application No: Date Received:

TITLE OF PROJECT

The relationship between Islamic collections and their audiences

THIS PROJECT IS:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐
University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒
Other ☐ (Please specify):

INVESTIGATORS

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name /	Dr John Carman
Highest qualification & position	PhD, Senior Lecturer
School/Department	Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural
Telephone:	[redacted]
Email address:	[redacted]

Name: Title / first name /	Dr Katherine Brown
Highest qualification & position	PhD Lecturer in Islamic Studies
School/Department	Birmingham University's Department of
Telephone:	
Email address:	[redacted]

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family	
Highest qualification & position	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of student:	Rana Ibrahim	Student	[redacted]

Course of study:	Cultural Heritage MA by Research	Email	
Principal	Dr John Carman		

Name of student:		Student No:	
Course of study:		Email	
Principal			

ESTIMATED START OF PROJECT Date: 27/09/2015

ESTIMATED END OF PROJECT Date: 2020

FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

Funding Body	*Approved/Pending /To be submitted*
[First-year funding – Charity Spalding Trust Second year self payment	

If you are requesting a quick turnaround on your application, please explain the reasons below (including funding-related deadlines). You should be aware that whilst effort will be made in cases of genuine urgency, it will not always be possible for the Ethics Committees to meet such requests.

I would appreciate a quick turnaround on this application, because I am constrained by museum staff availability for undertaking the research and they are keen that it takes place soon.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

The purpose of this project/dissertation is to examine the reception of Islamic collections held in UK museums. The project is investigating the relationship between the Islamic collections and the museums' audiences. I am also asking, "How do museums frame, understand, curate and communicate Islam?"

To start the research journey, I will use a comparative methodology approach using mixed methods. The first approach which I intend to use is case studies of two different and unique museums: the Museum of the History of Science and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. Of course, both the museums that I am studying hold substantial Islamic collections and have a great focus on working with unique collections such artefacts from the Islamic world. The

Museum of the History of Science (MHS) has an unrivalled collection of astrolabes and other scientific artefacts from the Islamic world, making it an ideal case study for my research. The management of MHS is currently making plans as to how to celebrate the Museum's centenary in 2024, and I envisage that the results of my research will feed into these plans. The distinctive layout of the Pitt Rivers Museum, which showcases how different cultures responded to the same challenges of survival, means that Islamic objects are displayed alongside objects from other cultures and countries. It makes a good comparison with MHS, which groups objects from different cultures separately.

I will also construct questionnaires which will ask detailed questions of both museum staff and visitors as to how they interact with Islamic collections, both in the galleries and on the websites and digital resources provided by the two museums I will be studying. Depending on accessibility, I will also ask museum staff about their experiences of working with Islamic collections held in museum stores that are not open to the public. In addition, my questionnaire will challenge staff to think about how Islamic objects should be displayed in the future. I will then use my mixed methods approach to analyse the results of my questionnaires.

In addition to assessing the audiences' knowledge of, and responses to, Islamic collections, I expect that the results of this research will inform museums in the future as to how they present their Islamic collections. In particular, my results might feed into future visitor surveys currently being planned by the Museum of the History of Science and the Pitt Rivers Museum. My other aim is that these results will become a useful reference for museum professionals working with Islamic collections.

CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

My research methodology is a mixture of statistical techniques and descriptive case study research. In particular, I will gather data using questionnaires for audiences and museum staff; this will be complemented by oral research using interviews with museum staff. The research methodology can be divided into four broad sections:

Case Studies: the Museums
I have chosen these two museums because, in addition to their world-famous Islamic collections, both the Museum of the History of Science and the Pitt Rivers Museum have very strong education and public outreach activities, e.g. working with schools, and now with refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore they make excellent case studies in the use by museums of Islamic collections. However, there are major differences in the way in which they display and interpret their objects, hence I will carry out a comparative study of the two museums and how they display objects and collections, using mixed methods. I will do this by distributing questionnaires in person to comparable audiences in the two museums, with the assistance of a volunteer if required.

Visitor survey and its questionnaires
In this section, I will ask visitors to fill in a regular survey, at least ten times in each gallery, when they visit the exhibition. I will also arrange with museum staff to carry out the survey when a specific activity is being held in the museum covering the Islamic collections in particular. Please see my attached survey. I will carry out these surveys under the authority of the directors of both museums.

Questionnaires and Staff Interviews
I have written thirty questions to ask different museum staff such as curators, collection managers and education and outreach officers, etc. After they have completed the questionnaires (which I will send them via Survey Monkey), I will arrange a meeting with the director of each museum contact them directly to arrange for a meeting; I am aiming to record the interviews and analyze the transcripts. During the interviews, I will query staff members as to their responses to individual questions in the survey. I will interview members of staff at every level, including the directors of each museum and also gallery assistants. I will carry out semi-structured interviews with the director and deputy director of each museum.

Evaluation of results
I will use basic statistical techniques, e.g. pie charts and Excel spreadsheets, to compare results from the two groups, i.e. museum audiences and museum staff. I will also carry out some content analysis of the questionnaire answers, identifying trends in the use of certain words and phrases. I will take great care to ensure that comparisons between the two museums are between two equivalent groups, e.g. ensuring that I am taking into account the cultural backgrounds of the two audiences. However, no two groups are ever exactly the same, and so my statistical analyses will be accompanied by discussion of factors that are not quantifiable, e.g. differences in cultural backgrounds, perhaps within the same ethnic and religious group. My conclusions will therefore be supported with both statistical and descriptive methods, of the kind described in, for example, in Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (5th edition, Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014).

DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

The type of participants I am hoping to use are:

Museum Staff and volunteers – including front of house staff as well as curators, education officers and museum assistants – adult age (over 18), at least five people in each museum.

Audiences or museum visitors such as families. I will be interviewing parents as to how their children responded to the gallery displays etc., though I will not be interviewing any children directly. There should be at least thirty adults/parents for each survey day.

The questionnaires I will be using for both visitors and museum staff are attached at the end of this document, after the appendices.

Participants will be from all ethnic and religious groups, in order to build up a picture of the entire community's response to Islamic collections. Each questionnaire will have seven questions under the heading 'Visitor Profile', which will include questions about visitors' ethnic and religious backgrounds. I will survey more people than I will use in my final analysis, then select completed questionnaires so that they are representative of the community. To ensure representativeness, I will distribute a sufficiently large number of questionnaires so that a wide variety of people will be covered, and select the same number of completed questionnaires from people of each cultural background. I will consider re-doing a survey if I have reason to suspect that the results are not representative. I will seek information from both museums' education and outreach officers as to upcoming events aimed at minorities. I will encourage people who I feel are under-represented in the survey to complete the questionnaire. For example, as I am an Arabic speaker, I can overcome one language barrier frequently encountered in museum visitors.

RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

I will email the leaders of the University of Oxford's Joint Museums Volunteer and Community Engagement Service, asking them if they can help find volunteers who are happy to conduct the gallery survey of museum visitors with me. I will arrange a meeting of the volunteers I have recruited to go through the questionnaire with them and ensure that they understand how it will work. A sample email to the Joint Museums Volunteer and Community Engagement Service is attached as Appendix B.

I will initially email selected members of the staff of both museums, asking them if they would be happy to complete my questionnaire via Survey Monkey. When they have completed the questionnaire, I will ask them if they are willing to give a face-to-face interview, which will be recorded. My invitation email to staff is attached as Appendix C.

CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained, explain why**.** If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

With each questionnaire, I will include a Consent and Information form (sample attached as Appendix A to this document), stating clearly what I propose to ask of the visitors and staff. This form will be attached to the emails sent to members of staff, along with the questionnaire.

My initial email to members of staff will ask them if they are willing to take part in the survey and also if they are willing to be interviewed. See Section 10 above.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

12. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

Sending “Thank You” letter to the museum staff I have interviewed and give the participants opportunity to access my completed thesis, e.g. online via resources such as UK Theses, or in the form of published articles in journals and the museum professional press.

13. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

Both questionnaires and volunteers will inform visitors of their right to contact me if they want to withdraw their data from the survey. I will indicate on the questionnaires, and also inform the volunteers, that I must have received their request to withdraw within two weeks of them submitting their completed questionnaires, and state that after this time it cannot be complied with because I will then have started analysing the data and it will be too late.

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

I will send email confirmation that their results have been withdrawn from the survey and have been securely destroyed (e.g. document shredder for paper questionnaires, deletion for staff questionnaires sent by email). In my email, I will explain that their responses will not be included in the study and that the results of the project will not reflect their responses.

COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

ii) Non-financial **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

b) Will all data be treated as confidential? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

All visitor questionnaires will be anonymous: they will not include the names of the participants. In the staff surveys, it will be optional for individual members of staff to include their names on the questionnaires. I will anonymize the names of individual staff members in the analysis of results.

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

I will state clearly in the questionnaires and interviews that I will know the staff members' names, but that the responses will be used anonymously in my analyses.

STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

Staff interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder. The tapes will remain securely in my possession and will eventually be destroyed in accordance with the University of Birmingham's security policies for storing confidential data. Visitor and staff surveys: results will remain securely in my possession and will eventually be destroyed in accordance with the University of Birmingham's security policies for storing confidential data. The only results of the research made available to the public will be my finished thesis and any publications resulting from it.

OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or NHS R&D approvals.

☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

To understand the Islamic collections data and to distinguish between culture, superstition, religious and scientific in the interpretation of the objects. My hope is also to counter extremist interpretations of the Islamic world and to challenge Islamophobic interpretations in the western world, by suggesting ways in which museums could communicate positive messages about Islamic cultures, using their Islamic collections.

I hope that the results of my research will enable curators to write better catalogues of Islamic collections, and also object labels, leaflets and guidebooks about these collections: these could be used as a reference for all colleagues to improve their research and interpretations, e.g. for future exhibitions and community engagement activities.

In particular, with regard to the Museum of the History of Science, I intend that the results of

RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

b) Outline any potential risks to THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please specify

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	☒	☐
Participant information sheet	☒	☐
Consent form	☒	☐
Questionnaire	☒	☐
Interview Schedule	☒	☐

DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the
University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described
herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any
other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:
The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Name of principal investigator/project	John Carman
Date:	18th October 2017

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

2. Respondents Consent and Information Form

Title of the Project: The relationship between Islamic collections and museum audiences
Name of the Researcher: Rana Ibrahim
Principal Supervisor: John Carman
Co-Supervisor: Katherine Brown

Aims of conducting this study
This is a University of Birmingham study aiming to discover and analyse the responses of museum visitors and staff to Islamic collections and their relation to contemporary British culture. It will survey visitors and staff at two university museums in Oxford that have notable Islamic collections: the Museum of the History of Science and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

What I am asking you to do?
Based on the nature of my study, your knowledge of Islamic collections is very important to me. Due to that, I will be asking some questions concerning that information specifically focusing on your response to the ways in which museums present Islamic material. This will only take between 30 and 45 minutes, , and at any point of the interview you are free to withdraw, without giving out any reasons for this act, and the information shall then be destroyed. In case you will later want to withdraw your data, you can do so up to 2 weeks after the interview, after which time you will not be able to do so.

Recording and Documentation of Information
If it is comfortable with you, I will record the interviews using notebooks and audio recorders. The collected data will be kept in secured notebook and no unauthorised personnel will have access to such data. And it will only be used for research purposes.

Risks involved and the Data collected
There will be no risk or benefits that will be derived from participating in the study. However, the information may be traced back to you based on your position and responsibilities in the office. The information you provide might be cited in publications, but no names will be mentioned. Further, the interviews will be transcribed into texts with codes and numbers replacing name and identity. The researcher only will have access to the complete interview.

Confirmation
Upon signing this form, you indicate you have understood and are satisfied with the information provided above, on your participation in this study. You are free to leave anytime you feel doing so, and ask questions or clarifications in any question or statement throughout the interview process.

Respondent's Name Signature

Researcher's Name: Rana Ibrahim Signature
NB: In case of any questions or concerns contact:

Rana Ibrahim

Email: [redacted]
Dr John Carman
Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage, University of Birmingham
Telephone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

3. Recruitment email to volunteer managers

Dear Colleague,
I am one of the Gallery Assistant staff at the Museum of the History of Science, and I am also doing a postgraduate research project with the University of Birmingham, part of which is on museum audiences' responses to Islamic collections. I attach a questionnaire which I propose to distribute to audiences at both MHS and the Pitt Rivers Museum, and am asking you if there is any possibility of you recruiting two or three people to help me run the survey at each museum. I would appreciate it if you could let me have your response as soon as possible. I have already contacted the directors of each museum and they are happy for me to proceed.

Kind regards,
Rana Ibrahim

4. Consent form for museum visitors

'Hello, my name is Rana Ibrahim. I'm a postgraduate student at the University of Birmingham OR I am working on behalf of Mrs Rana Ibrahim. My/her study research is about Islamic collections at [Museum name]. This survey will help me/Rana to find out what is the relationship between museum audiences and Islamic collections in a museum setting. I am / Rana is seeking visitors' views on the Islamic objects. I would be grateful if you could spend 4 or 5 minutes answering some questions.

Please tick here if you are happy to take part in this survey. ☐

If you do not wish to participate, please tick here ☐ and, if possible, give reason:-

……..

5. Consent form for museum staff interviews

Dear Colleague,
I am Rana Ibrahim, postgraduate researcher at the University of Birmingham. I am emailing you with a link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire in regard to Islamic collections at the [Museum of the History of Science / Pitt Rivers Museum]. I would be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire. In particular, I would be grateful if you could tick the relevant box if you are happy for me to come and interview you. If you indicate that you would like to be interviewed, I will contact you by email in due course to set up a date and time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Rana Ibrahim

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