



**South East Museum**  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## Effective Retail for Small Museums

Sourcing the Product Range

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The most successful museum shops are those that offer a range of carefully selected products with clear connections to themes relating to the museum and are chosen with the museum audiences in mind.

### 1. Range planning

You will need to consider your buying policy so that you can build a carefully curated range of products where each item fits with one of the themes you have identified as being relevant to your site. Some suggested themes are as follows (but you may think of others that are site specific):

- Key collections and 'star' objects taking your lead from the exhibition and interpretation spaces
- Historical eras associated with the museum
- Museum location, region and landscape
- Architectural features of the museum
- Characters linked to the museum

You may also wish to consider whether the buying policy will include sourcing ethically derived products or fair-traded items or products made in the UK.

### 2. Audiences

When planning the range don't be tempted to just buy what you like yourself but consider the visitor demographic taking account of:

- The visitor profile e.g. adults, children (and age range). You may have other visitor data available that can be used to help build a profile of your target audiences

- The spending power of your audience as this will indicate the range of price points to include. For example can you expect to sell high-end unique items?
- Gifting and cross-selling as visitors buy for other family members and friends e.g. grandparents buy gifts for grandchildren and often have a preference for 'educational' type products
- The motivations for visitors to come to your shop e.g. are they visiting the museum for the new exhibition and hoping to buy a memento of their visit, or visiting the coffee shop and looking to buy greeting cards that are different to those they can find on the high-street?

### **3. Product Categories**

Most museum shops will plan to stock a mixture of own branded merchandise unique to the site, items sourced from wholesale suppliers, locally produced products and handmade items from designer makers.

The budget for stock can be allocated across a range of product categories based on the sales forecast and availability of space for each product type.

For example you could decide that your buying framework would include:

- Museum branded products including souvenirs, postcards and guide book
- Greeting Cards & Stationery
- Publications
- Educational Gifts & Toys
- Adult Gifts (you may decide if this is too general a category so split this into sub categories e.g. jewellery / men's gifts)

It will also be important to consider:

- Individual price points ensuring there is a balance within the product range between low and high price points to include small pocket money items, mid-range merchandise and more expensive higher quality gifts

- Space allocation, shelf position, and how the items will be displayed. For example if you plan to sell clothing do you have a changing room?

After making an initial product selection look at the products you have chosen and edit the order again, this time thinking about whether each item meets the criteria set out in the buying policy. Also consider how you will display each item effectively and finally check that you haven't chosen too many similar lines – sometimes fewer lines displayed in more bulk can create more impact in the displays.

#### **4. Own Branded Merchandise**

Whether or not to stock own branded lines will depend on the museum resources as although higher margins can often be made from selling these items, they frequently have to be bought in large quantities and if they remain unsold for long periods may no longer be saleable and have to be written off.

If this route is considered it is advisable to start by ordering small quantities albeit at lower margins to test the market before committing to large overstocks.

#### **5. Wholesale Suppliers**

When contacting suppliers to place your order consider the following:

- It is likely that you will be offered a range of terms by the supplier which largely depends on the size of your order. This can include free carriage if the order meets the stipulated minimum order value, or an additional carriage fee if it doesn't. It can therefore be very tempting to increase the value of your order beyond what is actually required in order to get the free carriage. Rather than excessively overspending, especially if you are trialling new lines, it can prove wise pay the carriage charges.

When calculating the retail prices you will need to apportion the cost of carriage to each individual line. You will then need to recoup those charges by adjusting selling prices in order to make

the required gross profit. Alternatively, as this is new product trial you may decide to accept a reduced profit margin. If the products sell well you can re-order in bulk next time and incur lower carriage costs

- Discussing the order and negotiating with the supplier - they can often be flexible and may sometimes relax their own rules on minimum orders and carriage paid order values if they understand you are working with a very small budget. After all, if the first order sells well you are more likely to re order which will generate more business for the supplier
- Avoid committing to the type of wholesale fixtures which require permanent product refills e.g. alphabetical named products, where the museum will be tied into restocking in order to keep the fixture filled and will be ultimately left with stock that is difficult to sell without heavy discounts

## **6. Designer Makers**

To appeal to visitors looking for unique, authentic items a range of products can be commissioned from designer makers with work inspired by the museum collections e.g. jewellery, ceramics and textiles.

To source suitable products and develop relationships with local makers visit local craft and design fairs, bearing in mind that the quality of the finished product is very important.

Makers may agree to supply work on a 'Sale or Return' basis whereby the museum pays the maker a percentage of the selling price only after the item has sold. This affords the opportunity for the museum to trial more expensive items without any financial investment from the museum, although profit margins are typically lower than wholesale margins, and of course the space on the shelf used to display these items has the potential to be used to sell higher margin items.

For more information about managing this type of scheme to maximise your profits visit [www.gov.uk/vat-margin-schemes/overview](http://www.gov.uk/vat-margin-schemes/overview)

## **7. Sourcing Products**

Trade Shows

There are many sources of information available to help you source new suppliers. There are trade shows specifically targeted at the heritage sector as well as general gift and trade fairs. By registering to attend you will often be sent a list of exhibitors which in itself is a useful resource. A few examples are:

Top Drawer [www.topdrawer.co.uk](http://www.topdrawer.co.uk)

Pulse [www.pulse-london.com](http://www.pulse-london.com)

Spring Fair [www.springfair.com](http://www.springfair.com)

Autumn Fair [www.autumnfair.com](http://www.autumnfair.com)

ACE – Association for Cultural Enterprises Trade Show  
<https://acenterprises.org.uk>

Museums and Heritage Show – [www.museumsandheritageshow.com](http://www.museumsandheritageshow.com)

#### Comparative shopping

Making time to visit other comparator sites, both the small and national museums with similar themes to your own museum, is always a useful exercise for which time should be allocated on, at least, a seasonal basis. This will be an opportunity to see what other venues are stocking and how products can be merchandised.

Internet research can also be useful, looking at comparator museum ecommerce pages as well as sites aimed at the gift market such as [www.notonthehighstreet.com](http://www.notonthehighstreet.com) and [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com)

Other opportunities for research can be found on every High Street. For example a visit to a large book shop could help source relevant titles, and visits to large stores can help identify new trends and inspire new ways to display products in your museum shop.

#### Small Museum Retail Purchasing Syndicate - SMURPS

The Small Museums Retail Purchasing Syndicate is a pilot project launched early September 2016 as a resource for qualifying small museums. It has been designed to assist small museums in the research and procurement process.

In summary:

- 19 suppliers have agreed to offer a range of enhanced trading terms, including discounts, reduced carriage charges and lower minimum order quantities

- Some suppliers have also agreed to supply special packages of products affording the opportunity for museums to trial a range of own branded products prior to committing to larger quantities
- For museums with similar themes or in the same geographical area there is the opportunity to develop products collectively and to spread the order between the different sites

No.	Supplier	Product Category	Standard Terms	SMURPS Syndicate Terms	Contact details
1	<p><b>Canns Down Press</b>  <a href="http://www.cannsdownpress.co.uk">www.cannsdownpress.co.uk</a></p> 	Cards	Orders of £170 are carriage free Orders < £170 carriage £5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> order: Carriage free / no minimum</li> <li>• Subsequent orders as per existing terms</li> </ul>	Selina 01805 603341 <a href="mailto:sales@cannsdownpress.co.uk">sales@cannsdownpress.co.uk</a>
2	<p><b>CD Heritage</b></p> 	Museum Bespoke Products		For syndicate museum members in the same geographical area CD Heritage can produce a single master image which can then be translated across a selected giftware product range and stock called off by the sites involved. Products available include China mugs, Tea Towels, melamine trays and coasters, Fridge Magnets, Key Rings etc. Their website has more details and pictures of what other Heritage sites have done. This route could deliver quite low MOQ's / cash flow / stock holding commitment for each site involved. The image/s could be historical / geographical etc.	Garry Dawson 07894 051986 <a href="mailto:sales@cdheritage.com">sales@cdheritage.com</a> <a href="http://www.cdheritage.com">www.cdheritage.com</a>
3	<p>Enormous Art  <a href="http://www.enormousart.com">www.enormousart.com</a></p>	Museum Bespoke Products	Carriage charges £15	Carriage charges reduced to £10 for syndicate members	Catriona Lister 0114 230 9800

	<b>ENORMOUS ART LTD</b>			and orders >£150 are free carriage	catriona@enormousart.co.uk
4	<p>Fair to Trade <a href="http://www.fairtotrade.com">www.fairtotrade.com</a></p> 	Gifts	<p>Minimum first order is usually £250</p> <p>Carriage paid on order &gt;£250</p> <p>Carriage £6.99 on orders &lt;£250</p>	<p>No minimum order quantity</p> <p>Free carriage for museum syndicate members regardless of size of order</p> <p>NB Products are supplied in small packs (never more than 12) and packs cannot be split</p>	<p>David Woodcock</p> <p>0118 983 5767</p> <p>david@fairtotrade.com</p>
5	<p>Farrah's of Harrogate <a href="http://www.farrahs.com">www.farrahs.com</a></p> 	Gift food items	<p>Minimum carriage paid order amount of £200 or for orders over the value of £100 there is a charge of £10 for carriage.</p>	<p>Special starter pack £155.11 + Vat. Free delivery. Pro-forma required for first order. Including bespoke artwork for the museum a single image working to a standard templates.</p> <p>Starter pack includes:</p> <p>20314 170g CC Fudge Box x 20 20315 170g CC Fudge &amp; Toffee Box x 20 20472 200g CC Shortbread Drum x 12 20461 200g Choc Chip Biscuit Drum x 12 20650 100g Milk Chocolate Bar x 24 20610 100g CC Fudge Bar x 30</p> <p>Subsequent orders as per standard terms</p>	<p>James Clapham</p> <p>07771 878075</p> <p>sales@farrahs.com</p>
6	<p>Flametree Publishing <a href="http://www.flametreepublishing.com">www.flametreepublishing.com</a></p> 	Stationery & Gifts Books , Calendars and Diaries	£150 minimum order	£50 minimum order 40% discount on selling prices	<p>Frances Bodiam</p> <p>020 7751 9650</p> <p>frances@flametreepublishing.com</p>

7	Great Gizmos <a href="http://www.greatgizmos.co.uk">www.greatgizmos.co.uk</a> 	Gifts		For NEW accounts only: 5% discount on all products and carriage paid on first order Thereafter £250 carriage paid	Emma Coveney 01293 543221 emma@greatgizmos.co.uk
8	Heritage Books <a href="http://www.heritagebooks.net">www.heritagebooks.net</a> 	Books	Variable	A useful resource - Heritage Books provides a complete end to end service working directly with museums to research and supply ranges of the latest books from the UK's leading publishers. Managing orders and supply via industry distributors on behalf of the museum, with a central invoicing/contact system reducing administration and research time	Adam Loveridge 01285 642288 adam@heritagebooks.net
9	Holy Mackerel <a href="http://www.holy-mackerel.co.uk">www.holy-mackerel.co.uk</a> 	Cards, tea-towels, notebooks, bookmarks, fridge magnets and gift bags	£60 minimum order Carriage paid £100 Order <£100 P&P £7	No minimum order Reduced carriage fee of £5 for orders less than £100	Sarah 01395 578571 sales@holy-mackerel.co.uk
10	House of Marbles <a href="http://www.houseofmarbles.com">www.houseofmarbles.com</a> 	Gifts	Minimum order value £100 with a surcharge of £10 for orders <£100  Carriage is £10 on orders <£150	Carriage reduced to £5 on order values of <£150 for syndicate members (which is a substantial saving for small orders – potentially saving £20)	Sarah Campbell 01626 835358 Sarah.campbell@houseofmarbles.com
11	JH Design Point <a href="http://www.jhdesignpoint.net">www.jhdesignpoint.net</a> 	Museum Bespoke Products	Mugs Cost Price £4 +VAT	Mugs £3.65 + VAT Mixed designs can be supplied No minimum order - carriage will be charged at cost price For orders of 72 mugs carriage is free	Jean Hutton 0141 339 4927 jmhutton@btinternet.com

12	<p>Judge Sampson <a href="http://www.judgesampson.com">www.judgesampson.com</a></p> 	Museum Bespoke Products		<p>Special offers to syndicate members</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free artwork service</li> <li>2. Regular and Porcelain mugs (items 3 &amp; 4 page 19) MOQ 72 (normally 108)</li> <li>3. Tin Plate and Acrylic Magnets (items 1&amp;2&amp;4&amp;5 page 4) MOQ 100 (normally 300)</li> <li>4. Global Expressions Range (all items on pages 46&amp;47) MOQ 100</li> <li>5. Postcards 10p each + VAT for 500. (Normally 16p)</li> <li>6. Carriage subject to negotiation – usually carriage paid order value is £125. Otherwise is £8</li> </ol>	<p>Trevor Wolford 01424 401275 07740 256602 trevor@judgesampson.co.uk</p>
13	<p>Museums &amp; Galleries Cards</p> 	Cards	<p>Standard minimum order value is £150 Standard carriage is £7.50 Pro-forma for first order</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard minimum order value is reduced to £100 for syndicate members</li> <li>• Standard carriage charge is £7.50 will only apply to orders below £100</li> <li>• Preferred method of trading is direct via our web site</li> <li>• Payment terms will be strictly 30 days from end of month of delivery</li> </ul> <p>No Pro-forma requirement on first order for syndicate members</p>	<p>ashleigh@mgml.co.uk sales@mgml.co.uk 01373 462165</p> <p>Please quote 'Mike Broad' when placing an order to access discounts</p>
14	<p>Ravensden <a href="http://www.ravensden.co.uk">www.ravensden.co.uk</a></p>	Gifts	<p>1. Carriage Paid order value £300</p>	<p>1. Carriage paid for first orders irrespective of order value</p>	<p>Primary contact catherine@ravensden.co.uk</p> <p>Secondary contact</p>

	 <b>Ravensden Plc</b>		2. Standard carriage £9.00	2. Reduction of carriage paid order from £ 300 to £ 200 for subsequent orders 3. Reduction of standard carriage charge from £9.00 down to £ 6.00 4. Flexibility on pack sizes – can work with individual museums to find a solution that suits	michael@ravensden.co.uk
15	Talented <a href="http://www.madebytalented.com">www.madebytalented.com</a> 	Museum Bespoke Products	Standard terms Minimum order 200 bags or 250 tea towels for an exclusive, hand drawn, bespoke design	'Talented' offer the opportunity for museums to collaborate on a shared design, and to split the minimum quantity between them across the range of product including tea towels. The 2 exceptions are Greeting Cards and Mugs. These can be included in a share but only as an add-on to another product as it would not be enough to cover the cost to Talented of origination of the artwork.	Louisa Noble 0114 272 1201 louisa@madebytalented.co.uk
16	The History Press <a href="http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk">www.thehistorypress.co.uk</a> 	Books	35% discount	40% discount plus free delivery. No minimum order quantity or value  Museums will require an account with Macmillan prior to ordering: <a href="https://secure.macmillan.com/mdl/customerportal/accountform.aspx">https://secure.macmillan.com/mdl/customerportal/accountform.aspx</a>	Jonathon Harris 01453 732549 jharris@thehistorypress.co.uk
17	Usborne Publishing <a href="http://www.usborne.com">www.usborne.com</a> 	Books	42 – 45% discount  £4 carriage for orders <£100	50% discount for syndicate members Carriage charges remain at £4 for orders <£100	Lesley Preston 077767 64664 Lesleyp@usborne.co.uk

18	<p>Weekend 365  <a href="http://www.weekend365.net">www.weekend365.net</a></p> 	Museum Bespoke Products	<p>Standard quantities are 54 mugs</p> <p>Usually an additional charge for logos</p> <p>Carriage £30 for package quantity</p>	<p>Special Package available to Syndicate members for £261.30</p> <p>27 x 11oz Ceramic Mugs in acetate gift boxes @ £3.85 +VAT each</p> <p>25 x melamine Snack Trays 28cm x 13.5cm @ £3.35 +VAT each</p> <p>36 x Greetings Cards – can be 15cm square or 21cm x 7.5cm depending on design @ £1.35 +VAT each</p> <p>The addition of logos to be included with the design at no extra cost</p> <p>Logo and contact information to go on the backs of the greetings cards at no extra cost</p> <p>Reduced carriage – all 3 products come from different suppliers – total carriage will be £25 +VAT – normally this would be £30 +VAT for this quantity.</p>	<p>Miranda Bell  01172 302474  <a href="mailto:miranda@weekend365.net">miranda@weekend365.net</a></p>
19	<p>Westair  <a href="http://www.westair.co.uk">www.westair.co.uk</a></p> 	Gifts	<p>Carriage charged for orders &lt;£295 @ £6.95 + VAT</p>	<p>The first order &gt;£30 will be delivered carriage free for syndicate members - please email or phone Jon Williams to action</p> <p>Museums can contact their Westair rep to arrange for small deliveries to be made personally to avoid carriage charges subject to the rep being in the locality</p>	<p>Jon Williams  07931 630282  <a href="mailto:j.williams@westair-reproductions.com">j.williams@westair-reproductions.com</a></p>