

# Wellcome !!

to this talk

Two London Museums  
and  
A virtual museum for SAMHS Inc

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This is a talk presented to the South Australian Medical Heritage Society Inc. on July 21 2008 by Michael Patkin, webmaster for the Society's Virtual Museum.

The topics covered are:

- What is heritage
- Visits to two medical museums in London
- Layout of museum displays and relation to museum fatigue
- Advantages of a Virtual museum compared with a physical museum
- Possible tasks for preparing a Virtual Museum

See the Virtual Museum at [www.samh-tst.mpatkin.org](http://www.samh-tst.mpatkin.org)

## How this talk came about

- Tony Slavotinek
- Family visit to Manchester
- Interest in website design

How this talk and related activities came about:

SAMHS's president is Tony Slavotinek, retired surgeon at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Discussion with this writer suggested visits to medical museums in London, during a family visit to England. This writer's interest in computing raised the possibility of an Internet website for information (text and images) in the possession of the Society

South Australian  
Medical Heritage Society Inc

# Why Heritage ?

Identity, who we were, are,  
& will be

Tells us who we are

- Where we or our predecessors came from
- What we might add to and leave to those who follow

- Wikipedia criteria for cultural and natural criteria

"to represent a masterpiece of human creative [genius](#)";

"to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the [world](#), on developments in [architecture](#) or [technology](#), [monumental arts](#), [town-planning](#) or [landscape design](#)";

"to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a [civilization](#) which is living or which has disappeared";

"to be an outstanding example of a type of [building](#), architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in [human history](#)";

"to be an outstanding example of a traditional [human settlement](#), [land-use](#), or sea-use which is representative of a [culture](#) (or cultures), or human interaction with the [environment](#) especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change";

"to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living [traditions](#), with [ideas](#), or with [beliefs](#), with [artistic](#) and [literary](#) works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)";

OED :

**6. *attrib.* and *Comb.* a. *attrib.***

Characterized by or pertaining to the preservation or exploitation of local and national features of historical, cultural, or scenic interest, esp. as tourist attractions.

**1970 *Nature* 14 Nov. 691/2** The idea of the 'heritage highway' ...

Surprising in view of its frequent use now, the modern meaning of the term "heritage" in terms of preservation of culture, history and artifacts did not exist before 1979.

Before then, heritage referred mainly to personal possessions bequeathed to others.

## Foreshadowing a detailed discussion about heritage...

"to represent a masterpiece of human creative **genius**";

"to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the **world**, on developments in **architecture** or **technology**, **monumental arts**, **town-planning** or **landscape design**";

"to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a **civilization** which is living or which has disappeared";

"to be an outstanding example of a type of **building**, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in **human history**";

"to be an outstanding example of a traditional **human settlement**, **land-use**, or sea-use which is representative of a **culture** (or cultures), or human interaction with the **environment** especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change";

"to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living **traditions**, with **ideas**, or with **beliefs**, with **artistic** and **literary** works of outstanding universal significance.

(The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)";

Googling the term "heritage" yields far more than introductory definitions.

A discussion like this one above stimulates us to enlarge the aims of our Society, even within the constraints of the Virtual Museum displayed on the World Wide Web.

Imagination will encourage other developments as the Society gains a real-world site for its growing collection of artifacts.

Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre  
**Macfarlane Burnet**

- Personal - Biographical
- Diaries and Notebooks
- Nobel Laureate Files
- Publications by F. M. Burnet
- Book Manuscripts with Publishing Correspondence and Reviews
- Draft Manuscripts with Correspondence and Working Papers
- Correspondence - Subject Files
- Walter and Eliza Hall Institute Files
- Working Papers - Subject Files
- X-Disease, Kuru and Gajdusek Files
- Index Cards
- Scrapbooks
- Drawings and Watercolours
- Photographs
- Projection Slides
- Audio and Video Cassettes
- Personal Correspondence between Linda Burnet and Family
- Oral History Interviews - Audio CD copies
- Appendices

In the case of one individual, Nobel Laureate Sir Macfarlane Burnet, his Australian heritage site can list 20 different areas for memorabilia of his life and work.

This can be a template to help celebrate the lives of prominent South Australians, and others who identify with our State. Of course such a template will be modified according to the particular areas of interest and work of the subject.

## London medical museums

- Lots
- Museum fatigue
- Restrictions on photography
- Superb websites

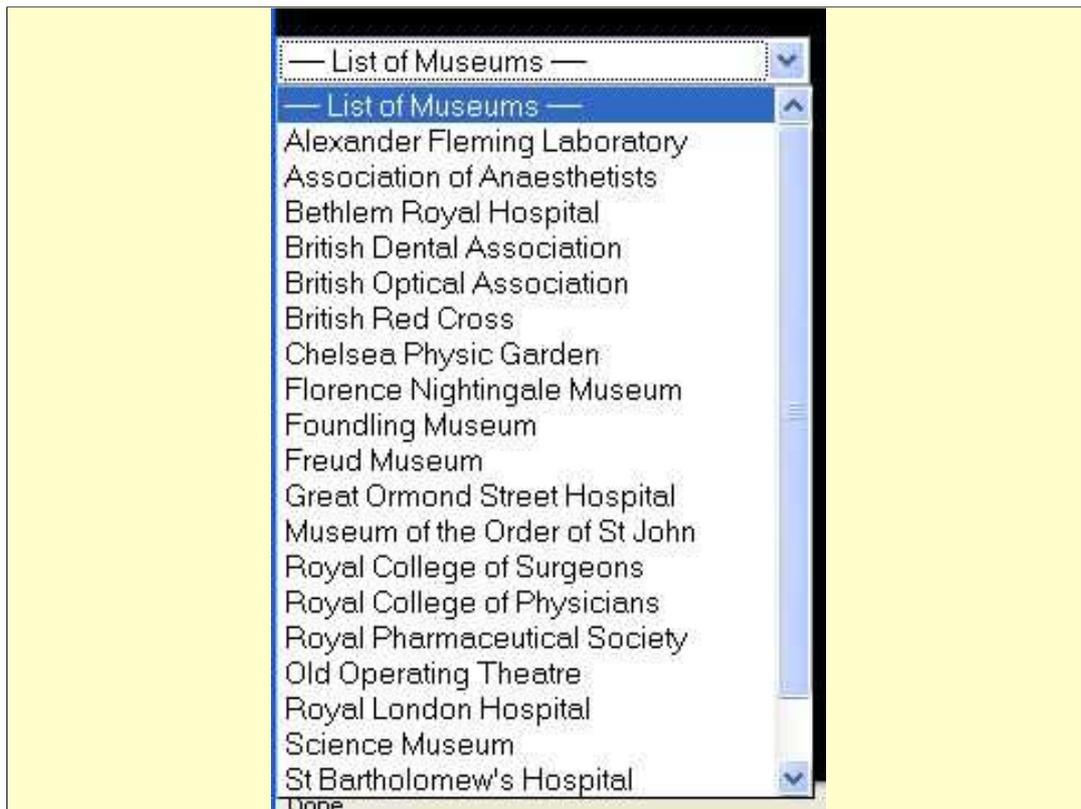
As the great Dr. Samuel Johnson said, whoever is tired of London is tired of life. London celebrates its own distinguished history and shows the visitor treasure-houses of all varieties.

#### LOCATION MAP OF MUSEUMS

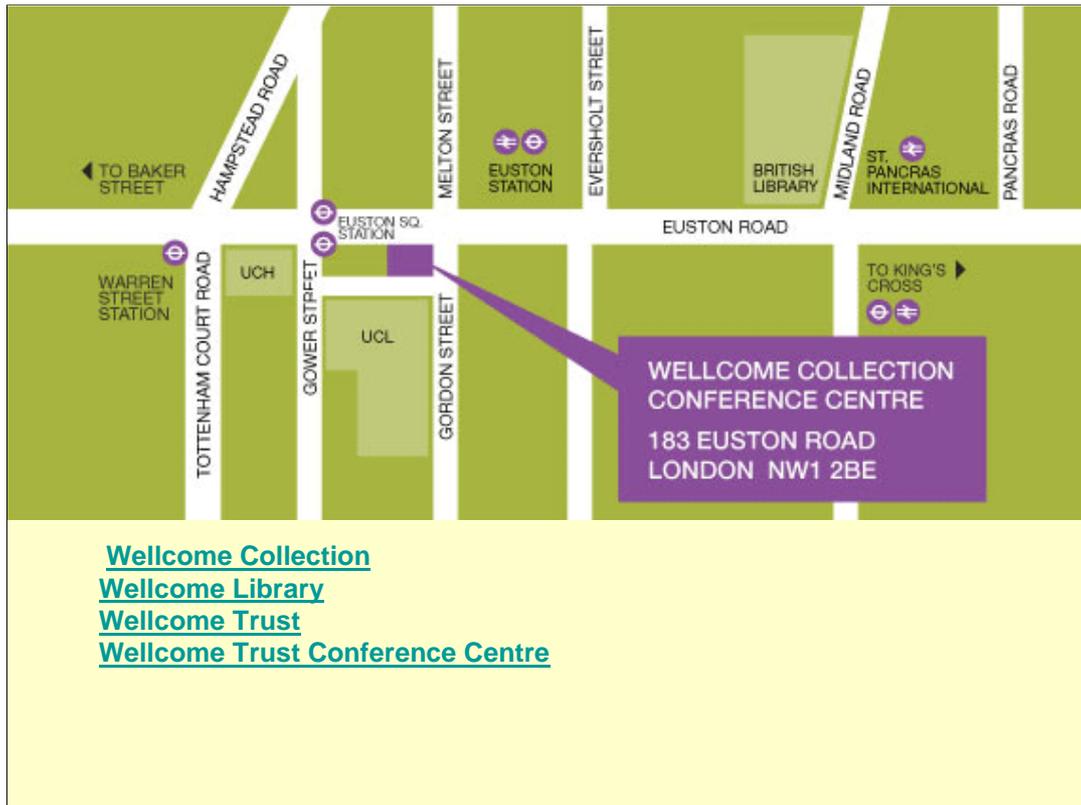
The map below highlights the locations of the museums across Central London. Please select any museum for further information.



Within Central London there are 19 separate historical collections of medical memorabilia and heritage. They range widely both in size and sophistication, and the particular area of interest.



Here, from an Internet listing, are almost 20 different sites about medical heritage or medical museums in Central London.



The largest and best endowed is the Wellcome Collection, housed in a multi-story building on the Euston Road, opposite the railway station and one street away from the British Library, perhaps better known to some by its former name of the British Museum.

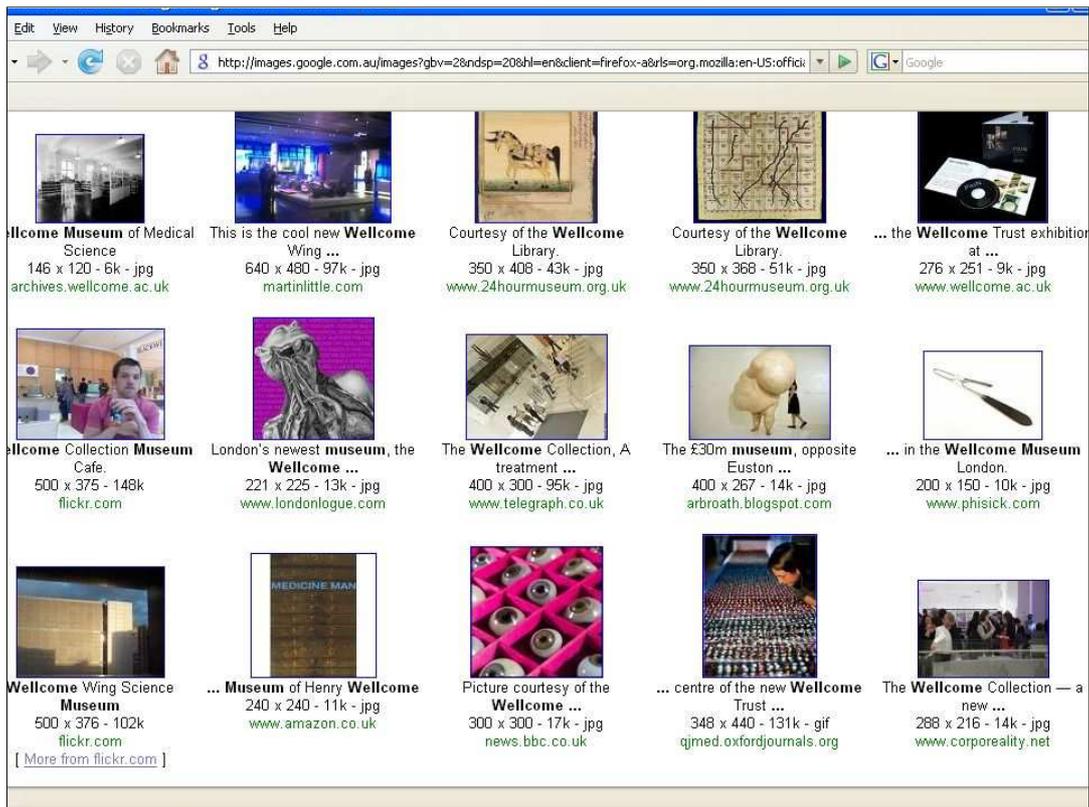
<http://www.wellcomecollection.org/>

## The Wellcome Collection

- Who was Henry Wellcome?
- Website
- Library card, bulletin each month

Henry Wellcome was a pharmacist in mid-nineteenth century London, joined later by Samuel Burroughs, who founded a great international pharmaceutical company.

A most unusual man, and with some resemblances to Adelaide's pharmaceutical pioneer, FH (Henry) Faulding, who has a page on the SAMHS website.



Here is a series of vignettes from the Wekkcime Museum website, well-worth a visit.

Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.wellcomecollection.org/

Wellcome Collection is part of the [Wellcome Trust](#)

**wellcome collection** Medicine | Life | Art

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**THE WELLCOME DEBATE**

THURSDAY 10 JULY, 10.00-21.00

**What's on**

Book now to enjoy our programme of free events.

**FROM ATOMS TO PATTERNS**

24 APRIL - 10 AUGUST 2008

**Sign up**

Join our mailing list for regular exhibition and event updates.

**SUMMER COLLECTION**

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2008

**Hire event spaces**

Planning an event? We have a range of inspiring spaces for hire.

**SHIFTS IN PERCEPTION**

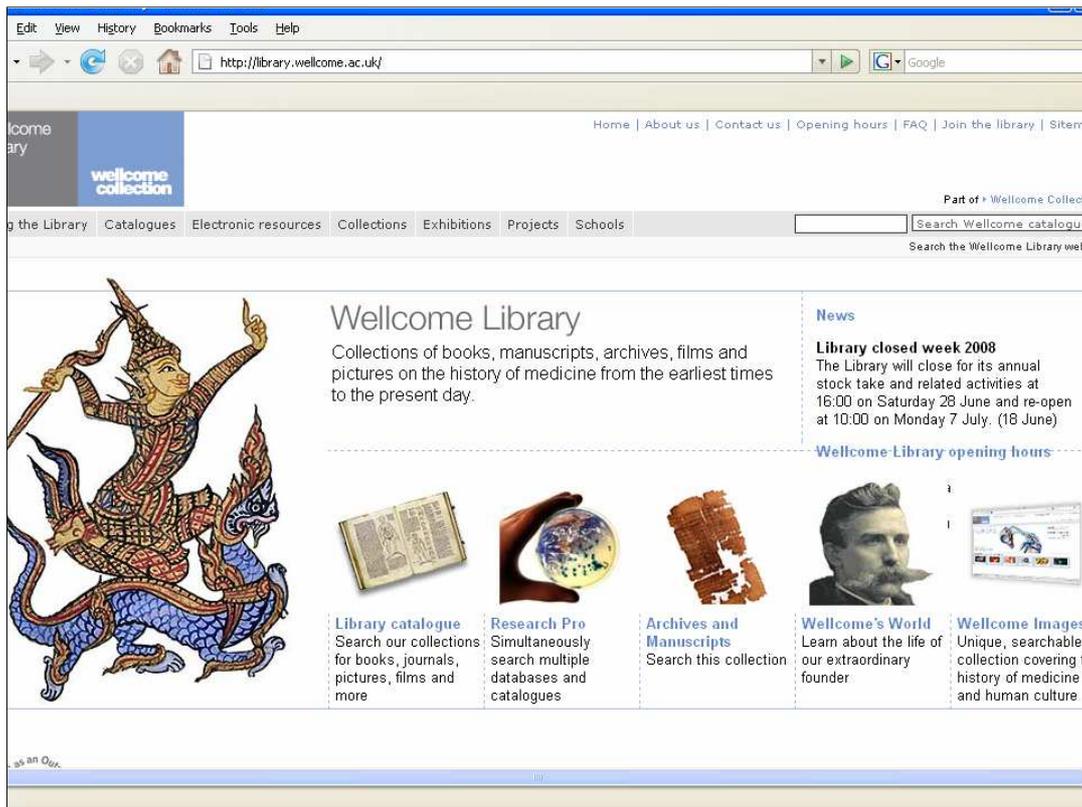
FRI 16 JULY 18.30-22.00  
SAT 19 JULY 12.00-17.00

**Visit the Library**

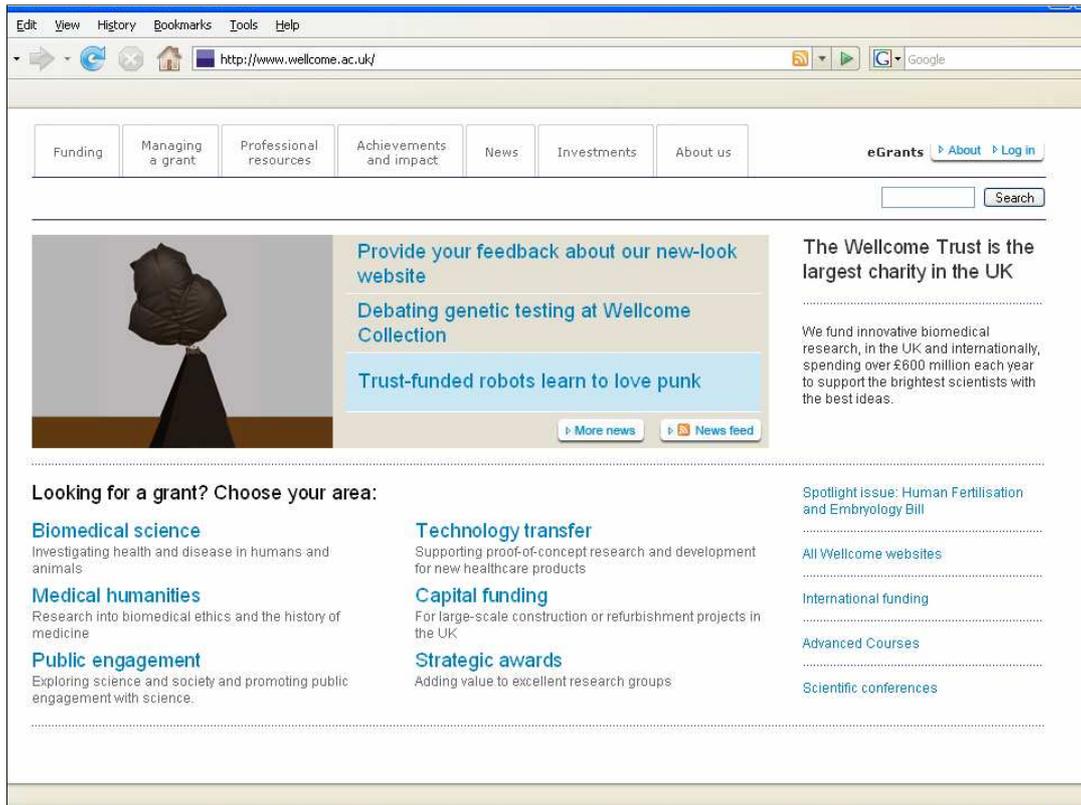
The Wellcome Library is now open six days a week.

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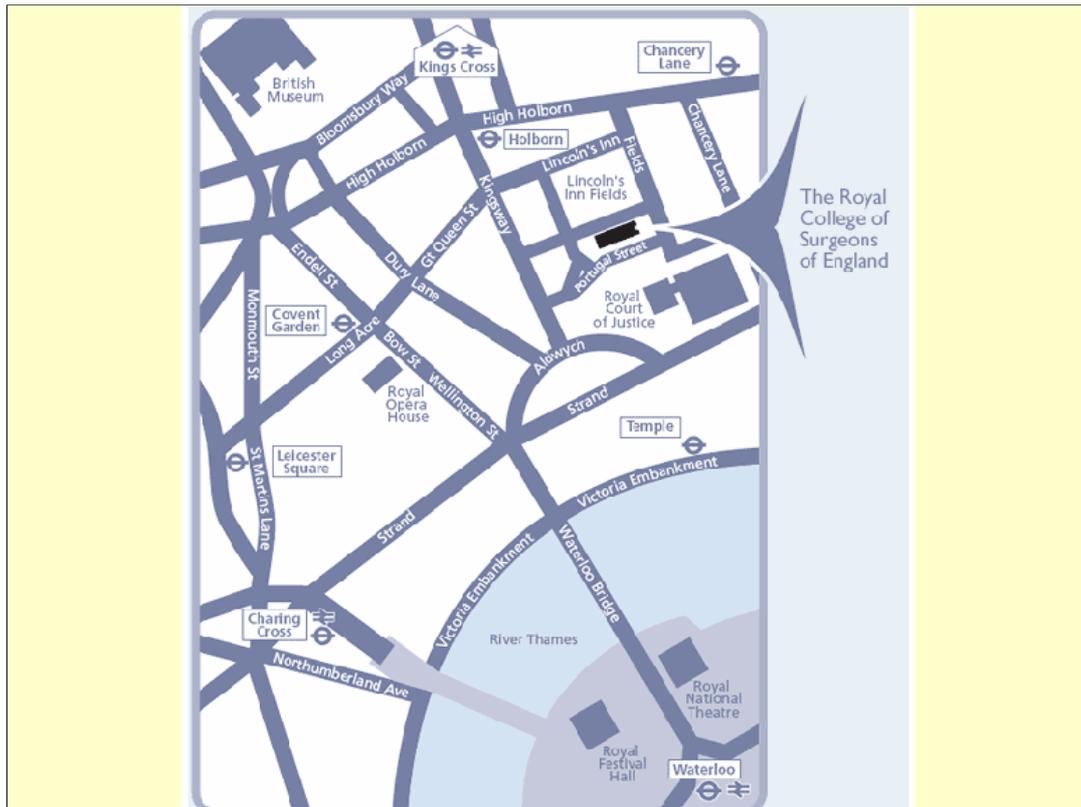
This page from the Wellcome website lists some events at the Museum.



The Wellcome Library is a remarkable part of the Institute.



Here is just a little more detail from the Wellcome website.



... and here is a map showing its handy location close to Euston Station (both Underground and Main Line).



This shows the façade of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The next few slides show some of the Hunterian Museum within it.

Go to <http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/content>

# The Hunterian Museum

## Who was John Hunter

- Scottish surgeon
- regarded as one of the most distinguished scientists and surgeons of his day.
- an early advocate of the application of rigorous scientific experimentation in medicine



## The Hunterian collection

John Hunter is considered to be the father of English surgery. There is a wonderful book about him and his brother William, called *Brother Surgeons*. A review of it as the Amazon.com website states:

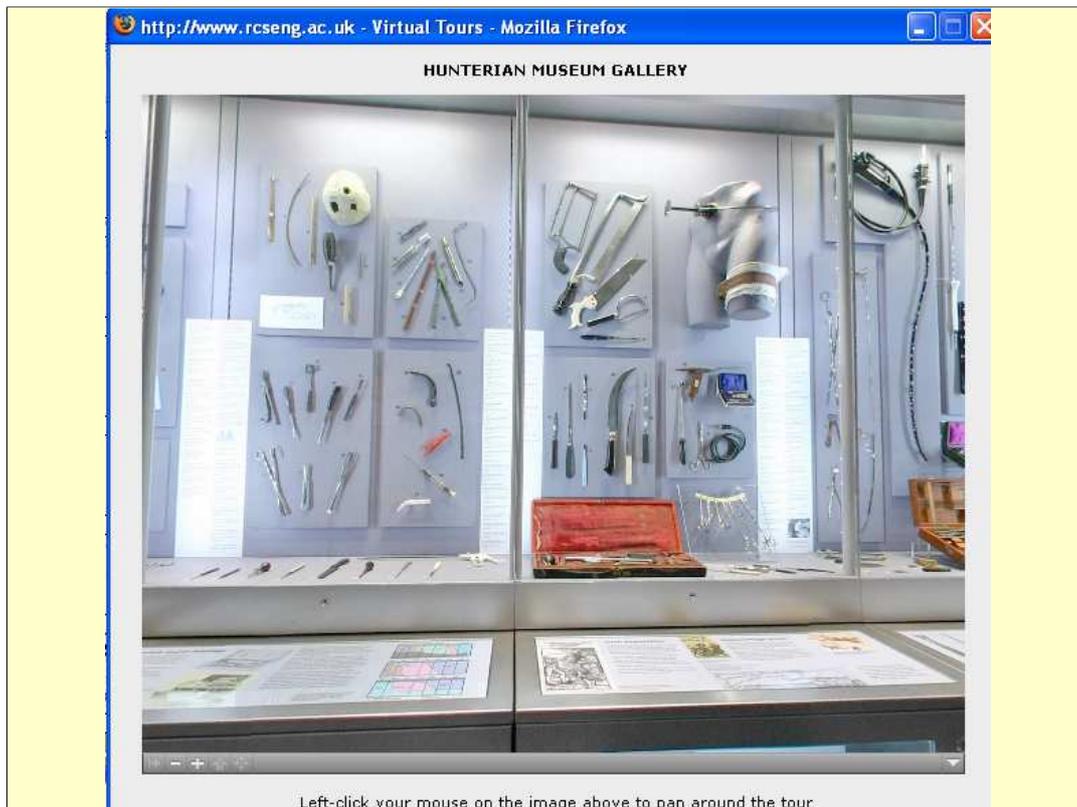
I have owned this book for the past 30 odd years, and have read it at least 10 times. It is the most compelling book that I have ever had the pleasure of reading, and each time I read it I enjoy it even more. The book could be described as fiction based on fact, as it is the true story of the Hunter brothers who pioneered a way forward in medical science, having being given credit for discovering the lymphatic system. The story relates about two brothers, one an already established surgeon in London, and his brother who came to stay with him from Scotland, and became absorbed in the work that his brother did. So much so, that he gave up his plans to join the army, and assisted his brother in his work, and eventually became the one who made these wonderful discoveries. The background is 18th century England, and a time when grave robbers sold the bodies to surgeons for their experiments. William Hunter, the well established and respected brother in London society was climbing rapidly up the society ladder, while his brother John, when not working with dead bodies, was cavorting in the local inns of London, mixing with the dregs of society, and seeking his pleasure with the ladies of the night. This book will give you a great insight into the lives of people of that era and how they survived. I promise you that you will return to this book time and time again once you have read it.



The Crystal Gallery contains over 3,000 specimens prepared and collected by John Hunter. They are housed in eight spectacular showcases enclosing the central atrium of the museum space. The surrounding exhibitions explore the social and scientific context of Hunter's life and work.

This gallery encourages wonder at the nature and scope of Hunter's collection and helps visitors to gain a deeper understanding of why the collection and its creator have remained significant for more than two centuries.

A dedicated computer terminal within the gallery provides access to the detailed scientific and historical information about the specimens.



This image from the RCS website shows a selection of older surgical instruments. You can get a better view by going to it directly at

<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums/museums>



An old one-piece scalpel, unlike modern ones which have replaceable blades.

## Museums in general

- Worldwide tens of thousands

### UK Museums Association

... enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.

... institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artifacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.

- Outcomes

Something about museums in general

# Museum Fatigue

- Patterns constant, predictable
- best way to predict visitor behaviour is to know more about the visitors as individuals.
- Interest in exhibits decreased as visits progressed (traffic flow, exhibit near entrance)
- Plateau approx 30-45 minutes
- then cruise and stop more selectively
- harder to view if presented poorly
- less interest with more displays
- isolation, size, contrast with setting background, sensory features (sound, smell, or touch), lighting, and line-of-sight placement, activity, size, colour and visibility, distraction of an open door, and arrangement of displays
- vertical and horizontal patterns, amount of information, symmetry, and figure-ground contrast

.. And something about an old problem and how to deal with it.

## To hold visitors' attention, first attract it

- Increase exhibit **distinctiveness** - size, contrast with background, line-of-sight placement, etc), and **locate** exhibits in relation to traffic flow (landmark objects, hotspots of visitor attention, inertia, and the right-turn bias) **multi-sensory** stimulation
- Reduce **mental effort** required to understand exhibits by considering how information is presented.
- Motivate visitors to **engage** with exhibits by asking questions, correcting misconceptions, interesting content, mental imagery, handouts, 3-D objects and opportunities for interaction, **discontinuity**, change of **pace**, **immersion** (eg space surround)
- Minimise **distractions** such as sounds, competition from other exhibit elements and novelty in the surroundings.
- Provide opportunities for visitors to take **breaks** (because they will help to replenish attention capacities).

-oOo-

Some more ideas for museum designers

## Why a virtual museum

- Saves carbon - transport, printing
- Saves effort - tyranny of time and distance
- Saves crowds

### Why not:

- No tangible interaction, atmosphere
- 3D viewing yet to be online

Why a virtual museum , and why not.

In the case of the SAMHS, a big reason is we could not afford a real-world one housing more than a few items.

## The SAMHS Virtual Museum

- 13.6 megabyte
- 515 images, 71 folders, 7 Galleries

Of course it keeps growing. In a few months it grew to 120 pages and 25 Megabytes.

# Tasks

for the SAMHS virtual museum

Monitor accuracy and completeness

Enrich the website

Encourage visitors, usage - studies, research

Develop links and networks with institutions, esp  
to our website

More paradigms e.g. oral history, resource for  
students, leverage for physical collections

-o0o-

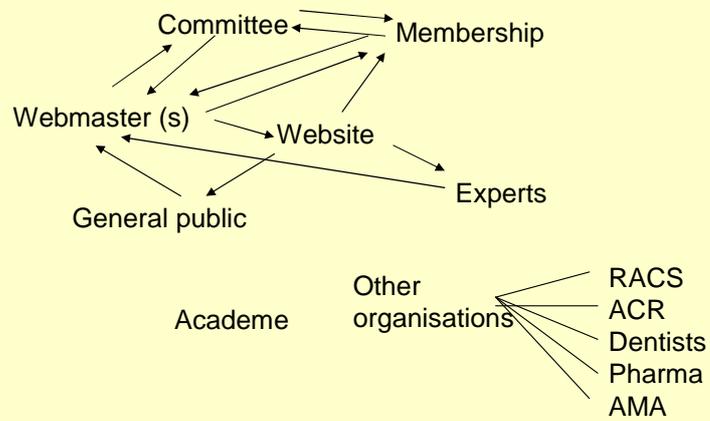
FOR THE FUTURE ...

## Timeline, resources

- Days, not decades
- Infective individual enthusiasm

More ...

## Functional network



Some thoughts about planning.

I welcome more.

Email me at [mpatkin@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mpatkin@bigpond.net.au)