

Benchmarking Data and The Media

Cultivate a good relationship with the media and it will pay dividends – museums tend to offer ‘easy’ editorial for reporters.

“Museums are basically a good news story and quite photogenic... Especially in a relatively small place you are news and features material. Not knowing the editor or being friendly with a reporter is a bit neglectful.”

(Maurice Davies, head of communication and policy at the UK Museums Association, quoted in Museum Practice Issue 49, 2010)

Where does Benchmarking data fit in?

See Benchmarking data as a ‘hook’ for your media coverage – lots of facts and figures is unlikely to sustain interest for long, but it will draw people in so that you can tell them more qualitative information.

Examples of how you might use Benchmarking data to grab attention about the key facts include a significant increase in visitor numbers or the financial value of your volunteers.

Then you might support this with more detail and narrative available from other sources - What is it that visitors particularly enjoy about your museum? What do they say keeps them coming back? How have you achieved particularly good visitor numbers, e.g. through an exhibition? What qualities do your volunteers bring to the museum and what does the museum give back to them? How does volunteering bring your community closer?

Press Releases

As well as inviting the press along to key events, you can also send them press releases. These tend to be better received if you have already established a personal relationship with the reporter you send them to.

The Principles of a Good Press Release:

- Try to keep to one or two sides of A4 if possible – adjust the header and footer if necessary.
- The style of the text should stick to using short sentences as well as simple but engaging language. Try to get across why this information is news worthy – What is new or different? Why is it important? Who might it be of interest to?
- Remember to include basic important information: the date on which you are issuing the press release, the contact details of the individual(s) responsible for handling press enquiries (name, address, e-mail and telephone number) and your organisation’s logo. If you don’t have one already, set up a template that includes these above points.

See attached for a sample press release put together by the Arts Council and visit the link below to download their useful Advocacy Toolkit:

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/advocacy_toolkit_130710.pdf