

Museums at Night 2012

MAKING THE MOST OF THE MEDIA Toolkit

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1. Overview

Museums at Night is the annual UK-wide weekend of late openings at arts and heritage venues, which captures people's imaginations and encourages audiences to do something different with their evening.

The festival provides the opportunity for the sector to come together around a single, simple campaign that is clear and attractive to both audiences and the media.

The success of Museums at Night relies on all participants contributing to the overall umbrella campaign, helping us to achieve greater awareness across the media. This PR toolkit has been designed to help you get the most out of Museums at Night 2012.

2. How the campaign works

Every year Museums at Night is more successful, thanks to the creativity and enthusiasm of the participating museums and galleries. In 2011 the festival received media coverage with an AVE of over £1.1 million – and attracted well over 100,000 visitors.

Our PR campaign depends directly on stories from the participating museums and their events: the more interesting events we have, the better the coverage we can get. The PR campaign works across traditional media (magazines, guides, newspapers, radio and TV) and online media (websites, blogs, events/listings data sharing).

Although Culture24 will be organising a national PR campaign, we know that you will have stronger links with your local press, so it is crucial that we work together to ensure we maximise coverage. Once you have planned an event, please make sure you let us know the details, **register it in Culture24's database** and send us your press releases.

In turn we will keep you updated with any media requests we get. Make sure you've signed up to receive the [Museums at Night e-newsletter](#), where we notify you about promotional opportunities as they arise!

Culture24 will be publishing news stories throughout the build up and launch of Museums at Night. We will produce a range of themed highlights such as family, spooky, film and literary events etc, again, dependent on the events themselves. We will also produce regional and city roundups and listings.

Over the Museums at Night weekend we will send journalists to cover events around the country, and film public responses to the evening. We also conduct extensive evaluation to improve the campaign, with in-depth surveys for visitors and venues.

3. Culture24 contacts

Culture24 organises Museums at Night with a small central team:



Nick Stockman is campaigns manager and is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the festival. He can be contacted at nick@culture24.org.uk or 01273 623279.



Rosie Clarke is campaigns officer and is the first point of call for further information, queries about putting on events, and details of how to list them in the Culture24 database. Contact her on rosie@culture24.org.uk or 01273 623336.



Pandora George runs the national PR campaign. Send your press releases and images to her to be included in possible highlights, features or other national media opportunities. Contact her on pandora@bulletpr.co.uk or 07729 469220.



Richard Moss is Culture24's Content Editor. Send your press releases to richard@culture24.org.uk for possible coverage on the main website. The editorial team phone number is 01273 623295.

4. Your event listing in Culture24's database is crucial!

As the PR campaign is based on the events themselves it is crucial that you upload your event details as soon as possible into Culture24's database. This is the listing that will appear in the media, so make sure it sounds exciting and does your event justice! Here are

instructions on [how to register your event](#) – don't just call it Museums at Night, but give it an imaginative title.

Rosie also made this helpful video <http://bit.ly/gziOtA> with tips on describing even the simplest event in a compelling way – bear in mind that many prospective visitors may never have heard of your venue before, so use your event listing to explain what makes your venue special, any highlights of your collection that they'll be able to discover, and how your event will be surprising / beautiful / spooky / intriguing / inspiring.

Make your event come alive with atmospheric, sensory descriptions – will visitors be able to hear the hissing of steam engines, smell Victorian carbolic soap, handle ancient objects, or sit and relax with tasty homemade cake in your café?

This is your chance to persuade potential visitors to come out and try doing something different with their evening – so make the most of it! If you have any further questions or would like to discuss your event plans, please email [Rosie Clarke](#) or call 01273 623336.

Once your event is listed it will automatically appear on our Museums at Night Google map, be fed into our listings system and appear on any site we share our data with (tourist sites, the Nuit des Musées website etc). We compile events roundups to send to national, regional and local media, and your listings on Culture24 form the basis of this.

Extra PR opportunities: once your event has been registered, it will be considered for inclusion in BBC History Magazine's Guide to Museums at Night, and your venue will be considered as a filming location for Sky Arts' documentary about the weekend.

5. Planning your press campaign

Make sure you utilise local media as much as possible, as this is a great source of publicity for your events! Think about the audience you'd like to attract, and where they may get their news from – local papers, the radio, local blogs, Facebook groups, school newsletters?

Contacts: You may well have great contacts already. If not, research your local media, including newspapers, radio & TV, monthly and weekly what's on guides, and prepare a list of media contacts. You will need to include news editors, listings editors and features editors in print media and producers of local radio and TV programmes that cover events and local news.

Don't forget to include digital media contacts too - does your area have a local 'What's On' website, bloggers who write about local attractions, Facebook groups or online forums?

Prepare: Read the publications you're targeting before you contact them, to see what type of sections they have and what kind of features they might be interested in running - this enables you to tailor your pitch accordingly.

For example, look in your local paper for profile-raising opportunities for representatives from your venue – these could range from an in-depth interview to brief profile slots or Q and As. Always make sure the journalist links the interview with your event and with Museums at Night.

Storytelling: Are there any personal interest stories behind your museum? Do you have a curator who runs the museum with a lifetime passion for his/her subject? Will any new artefacts be going on display, will you be talking about stories you've only recently discovered, or giving people access to an area that's not normally open to the public?

Stories like these are great for feature writers: if you have any, please email Pandora on Pandora@bulletpr.co.uk.

Celebrities: If you know any prominent public figures in your area, ask them if they would like to support the campaign. Get a quote from them to use in your press release.

Topical: Can you hook your event to anything else going on in your area, such as an event, personality or anniversary?

**Journalists like stories that are topical and include human interest.
Local media like stories with a local angle.**

Timing: Check what the deadlines are for your local media. As a general rule, monthly magazines need information at least 8 weeks ahead of the event while weekly newspapers need it 2 weeks ahead. Contact broadcast news crews 1 week in advance.

Email: Most journalists now prefer to receive information via email. Make sure you follow correct email etiquette and blind copy (BCC) the list of contacts you're sending press releases to: it's against the Data Protection Act to circulate lists of email addresses.

Follow up: Keep a note of which editors, journalists and bloggers you send press releases to. Follow them up a couple of days later with a phone call to see if they are interested in covering your event.

Competitions: Consider running a competition together with a local paper, radio station or blog – this can be a great way of getting people engaged with your venue. The prize could be family membership, entry tickets, a meal in your café or items from your shop.

Be efficient! Make sure someone is available on the telephone number you give for further information, and respond to media requests as quickly as possible. Journalists usually call when they are on deadline and need an immediate response.

National PR Campaign: Make sure Bullet PR have details of any really press worthy events, unusual angles, quirky or human interest stories and also any images – please send them to pandora@bulletpr.co.uk.

Press Association: We will be liaising directly with the Press Association, who compile most of the national listings, but it helps if you contact them as well.
Email events@pressassociation.com.

6. Writing a successful press release

The basic tool kit you will need consists of two things, a **press release** and an **image**.

Good images make all the difference to how much coverage you get, so choose arresting high-res images, ideally featuring people or children smiling and having a good time.

Pictures from previous Museums at Night events or showing visitors engaging with objects from your collection are ideal – particularly if they reflect your night-time theme.

Writing your release

Keep it clear and simple. Put a short catchy **headline** at the top and **date** it.

Remember to include all the important information about your event: the five 'W's - what, when, where, why and who as well as how!

Ensure the news release has a local angle, but don't forget to mention that it is part of the national Museums at Night campaign.

Include a **quote** in the release if you can, but keep it short and relevant.

Visitor information should be included, either in the body of the release or in the Notes to Editors section at the end of the release. This should include details such as opening times, ticket prices and a general information number.

Put a **contact** name and telephone number at the bottom of the release, and ensure someone is available to deal with journalists' inquiries. If a journalist calls you, be ready to respond quickly as they may be on deadline.

If possible, include a Museums at Night logo and the website address: www.museumsatnight.org.uk. You can [download the Museums at Night logo here](#).

If possible, please include this general paragraph about the Museums at Night national campaign:

Museums at Night is the annual after-hours celebration of arts, culture and heritage when hundreds of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage sites open their doors for special evening events. It is coordinated by Culture24, and takes place over the weekend of Friday 18th – Sunday 20th May 2012. www.museumsatnight.org.uk

Some editorial departments don't accept email attachments, so copy your press release into main body of the message. Mention at the end that there are images available (you could specify what they are).

7. Notes to editors

In all press information drafted, please use the following copy for your Notes to Editors section. This ensures consistency of message and gives journalists the correct generic information about Museums at Night.

1. **Museums at Night** is the annual after-hours celebration of arts, culture and heritage when hundreds of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage sites open their doors for special evening events. It takes place over the weekend of Friday 18th – Sunday 20th May 2012. www.museumsatnight.org.uk

2. **Culture24** is a non-profit cultural publishing organisation supporting arts and heritage venues to reach audiences across digital platforms. We collect and share cultural data, publish websites, run the national Museums at Night campaign and lead action research projects. www.WeAreCulture24.org.uk
3. **Arts Council England** champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2011 and 2015, we will invest £1.4 billion of public money from government and an estimated £0.85 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk
4. **Love Art London** is the leading independent arts club in London, providing its members with exclusive behind-the-scenes access to the art world. Every month Love Art London creates 4 unique pop-up events at galleries, studios and places of cultural interest, each of which are led by artists, curators, critics and those in the know. www.loveartlondon.com
5. **The Historic Houses Association** represents 1500 privately owned historic houses, castles and gardens throughout the UK. These are listed buildings or designated gardens, usually Grade I or II, and are often outstanding. www.hha.org.uk
6. **The Arts Marketing Association** is open to all arts professionals involved in bringing the arts and audiences together. The AMA has an active and diverse membership of over 1900 who regularly participate in professional development opportunities to improve their working practices. www.a-m-a.org.uk
7. **The National Trust** is a charity with a statutory duty to preserve places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland 'of historic interest and natural beauty for the benefit of the nation'. As Europe's largest conservation charity we protect over 350 historic houses, 160 gardens, 1,100 kilometres of coastline, 254,000 hectares of land of outstanding natural beauty, six World Heritage Sites, 28 castles and 60 pubs – and give access to them for people to enjoy. The Trust has around 4m members and 61,000 volunteers. Find out more at: www.nationaltrust.org.uk
8. **English Heritage** is the Government's advisor for the historic environment. We provide advice on how best to conserve England's heritage for the benefit of everyone. Most of England's heritage is in private hands. We work with landowners, commerce and industry, planners and developers, national, regional and local government, the Third Sector and local communities to help them conserve the historic environment. We promote public knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of our heritage. We are also entrusted with the custodianship of some of the most important monuments of human history – such as Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall. For further information about our work, please visit www.english-heritage.org.uk
9. **ICOM UK**, the UK Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM UK), is an organisation created in 1946 by and for museum professionals. ICOM is a unique network of almost 30,000 members who represent the global museum community. www.icom.museum

10. **Museums Galleries Scotland** represent over 340 museums and galleries across Scotland, which welcomes 25 million visitors and provides £800 million in value to the Scottish economy. www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk

8. Making the most of pictures

Photo requirements: Images for standard newsprint should be at least 300 dpi, A5 size (portrait or landscape) and in colour. Magazines may request higher resolution images, usually with a minimum file size of 2MB.

Include people and children in your pictures, if possible and relevant, to make the image more interesting – but make sure the photos are good quality and professional-looking. If you're taking photos of kids, make sure you get their parents' permission.

Attachments: Don't send lots of large files in one email. As a general rule, attachments should not be more than 3MB. A solution is to reduce the file size of your images, or to email a selection to the journalist one by one. You can also use a free file sharing site such as Dropbox or MailBigFile to share large images.

Essential info: All photographs should be captioned – emailed photographs may need a separate, longer caption with a short title and reference number embedded with the picture. Include a title, your venue name, the name of the photographer, the date, and any copyright restrictions.

Don't forget to send pictures of your events to Culture24 so that we can use them on our website, in the Museums at Night press image library, and to send out to regional and national media – email them to rosie@culture24.org.uk.

9. Photocalls

Consider setting up a **photo opportunity** for your event a week beforehand and inviting local media along. Be sure to give directions, times and other basic information about the event and ensure you have a spokesperson on hand to answer any questions.

Tell the editors what exactly they can expect from your photocall; if it's for television it should be 'a happening' and you should be able to provide someone for an interview. Make sure whatever you're doing – revealing a new object that will be on display at your event, or gathering your costumed volunteers together for a staged re-enactment – is visually interesting!

Make sure you invite the press along on the night of your event as there may well be photo opportunities – the picture editor is the contact you need.

You may also want to organise your own photographer on the night, so you can send pictures to the local newspaper if they do not send a photographer. You can also use these to promote your event next year! Remember, if you take any photos of children on the evening, ask their parents' permission first and explain how they will be used.

10. Broadcasting opportunities

If you're interviewed on the **radio**, be clear on the most important points that you need to get across to listeners. Have the basic facts about your event in front of you, and be prepared to steer your answer so you can include your key soundbites.

As the interviewer wraps up, try to get across the **next step** listeners should take – call a phone number or send an email to book tickets, turn up at a certain time, or come warmly dressed for your outdoors activities.

Last year we were contacted by a number of local news programmes wanting to film at an event – however, in many cases the event needed to be 'staged' a few days earlier in order to be slotted into a particular strand, or filming needed to happen before the start of the main event, in order for them to film 'live' and cut it into the early evening news programme.

Please let us know if you are holding this kind of event, as we may also want to send a journalist to cover it. And do send us any photographs/film so that we can put them on the Culture24 site as well!

Be aware that your event is a great opportunity to get feedback from visitors which you can use in future publicity. A few vox pops with photos or video of happy visitors explaining how they heard about your event, what their highlight was, and whether they'd recommend it to others can be useful for your printed brochures, your website or your social media channels.

11. Your website / blog

Make sure to promote your Museums at Night event on **your own website!** Explain what will be happening when, and make it clear how potential visitors can contact you for further information.

Is your venue part of a local group of museums, or run by the council? Ask if they'll share details of your event on their sites too.

If your organisation has a **blog**, this can be a great way to build excitement ahead of your Museums at Night event by sharing stories from your team as you prepare.

Are you constructing new displays, training volunteers, or welcoming performers in for rehearsals? Snap a couple of photos and share your news in a conversational tone of voice to draw people in – and include a call to action, such as a link to your event listing.

12. Email newsletters

If you already send out programmes of events or monthly news updates to an email mailing list, be sure to mention your upcoming Museums at Night event!

If you don't currently do this, it's a good idea to place a sign-up box on your website, a link in your email signature, and a printed form in your venue to **capture the email addresses** of members of the public who would like to be kept updated about news and events at your venue.

The people who attend your Museums at Night event this year may be potential members or even volunteers in future, so it's a good idea to have a channel to communicate with them.

You may like to keep different lists so you can send **targeted messages** to different segments of your audience, e.g. the public, local teachers, and Friends of your organisation.

Sending regular e-newsletters is a great way to build a relationship with your regular visitors and potential fans - why not offer perks such as invitations to your exhibition launches?

Cheap or free services such as Mailchimp and Aweber can make the process of designing newsletters and tracking their success easy.

13. Print publicity

All venues who registered their Museums at Night event in Culture24's database in good time will have received copies of BBC History Magazine's official printed **Guide to Museums at Night**, to distribute to raise awareness of the festival as a whole. These guides send readers to search the complete event listings on the Museums at Night website.

Culture24 also create customisable **poster and flyer templates** you can [download here](#) for free. We recommend keeping them simple – a compelling image, your event date, title, price and booking details and a few words explaining what will be happening are all that's necessary.

Where can you display print publicity?

- In your venue, think about the places people linger, read and take in information such as the entrance lobby or your café. Some of the most read posters are those displayed on the back of toilet doors!
- Community noticeboards around your town
- Tourist Information Centres
- Other arts / heritage attractions whose visitors might also like your venue
- Information packs in local hotel rooms
- Local cafes, shops, libraries, churches or community centres

14. Social Media

Every year, social media activity is a great way not only of promoting the Museums at Night festival and individual events, but also of listening to your audience and answering their questions.

Setting up a **Google Alert** to track mentions of your organisation across the internet is well worth doing and can help you monitor what others are writing about you, e.g. when a blogger visits your venue and reviews their experience – you can then respond to this quickly.

Do promote your events online by posting your event details on Twitter, Facebook and any other social networking sites that you use.

Before setting up a new social media account, however, do think about who in your organisation will be responsible for it, whether you have time for this, who it is aimed at, and what your definition of success will be – deeper engagement can be more significant than numbers. For more in-depth research on how to measure and evaluate success online, you may like to download Culture24's [Let's Get Real action research report](#).

A **Twitter** account is free and can be a great way of sharing short newsy updates to build a buzz, connecting with other local people and venues, having conversations and answering questions.

On Twitter, the Museums at Night 2012 hashtag is simply #MatN2012, and if you use it to talk about your events, [@MuseumsAtNight](#) will try to retweet you.

A **Facebook** page can be another place to share stories and images with fans, but perhaps the most useful aspect of Facebook for museums and galleries is the ability to create event listings, to which you can invite friends and friends of friends.

On Facebook, we're happy to add your institution's page to the [Culture24 page](#)'s favourites, and if you mention @Culture24 in your status update it will also appear on the wall of our page.

If you create **videos** before or during your Museums at Night event, you can upload them onto sites like YouTube or Vimeo, and make them embeddable both on your websites, and other people's.

Videos tagged with details of your venue, location, and what was happening will become long tail content – over the years, many interested people will eventually discover them and may in time come to visit you personally!

Do try to snap some photos of visitors having a good time at your Museums at Night event – and please share them in [our Flickr archive](#), which aims to capture all the fun of the festival weekend. Images you share here may end up on the Culture24 website, the Museums at Night blog, or even in our press image library for next year!

Finally, the [Museums at Night behind-the-scenes blog](#) is a great place find out about everything Museums at Night. From advice on how to run events, to tips on how best to promote and market your venue, the blog is the place for the people within the sector to learn about all things Museums at Night.

We are always looking for guest blog posts – this can be a great way to talk about your venue, celebrate the work your team does, and share best practice across the sector. If you'd like to write for us about any aspect of event planning or marketing for arts and heritage venues, [read what we're looking for](#) and contact [Rosie](#).

Good luck with your event - we hope you have a fantastic Museums at Night experience!