When Media Becomes Form

Declining conventions of materiality, space, and audience

in the popular music museum

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Abstract

*When Media Becomes Form* investigates the arresting experiment of the popular music museum project as it has evolved over the last twenty years. It argues that despite the need for adjustment, popular music is not essentially incompatible with the museum but, in fact, provides a compelling example of how the contemporary museum is animated, and sometimes bested, by the demands of today’s pluralistic and media-rich society.

The thesis is based on three central case studies—the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland), the Experience Music Project (Seattle) and the British Music Experience (London)—and the research draws upon a series of in-depth interviews with curators, directors of education and media specialists, as well as archival research, site visits and exhibition critiques. It examines the collections, exhibitions, and audience relations of the purpose-built popular music museum and analyses how it declines certain conventions of materiality, space, and audience in order to align its provision with its subject.

In terms of collections, it shows how the popular music museum, by finding value in mass produced objects, engages the social imaginary of a culture informed by celebrity and participation. In terms of exhibitions, it reveals how, by allowing a sense of co-ownership of the cultural narrative, the popular music museum produces an authentic ‘congregant space’. And, finally, in terms of visitation, it argues that the popular music museum, having recognized expertise within its audience and accepted that it cannot contain the visitor’s relationship to its subject within the space of the museum, embraces a notion of the extended visit that allows its audience to engage the museum from within the everyday.
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Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

Popular music is a relatively new subject for the museum. As a culture born of media—one that came into being at the intersection of technology, industry, and creative expression—popular music possesses characteristics and represents values that may seem incongruous with museum norms. Popular music engages the body and takes up residence within everyday life; it is transient and ephemeral, and it can get loud. It is a medium through which people often have their most profound cultural experiences, but it is also an industry that can be as greedy and monopolist as any other. Its mass-produced objects give rise to powerful personal attachments and anchor significant collective memories even though they might just as easily end up in the trash. Popular music can create connection between people with as little in common as the love of a song, but it also produces social boundaries able to fracture even the most cohesive image of community. Understanding the effect of popular music as a subject of the museum thus involves contending with these complicated conditions. It also entails reckoning with what the museum’s alignment with this new subject does to it own conventions, assumptions, and structure.

This thesis concerns the way in which the museum’s new content necessitates the adaptation of its provision. It examines the collections, exhibitions, and audience relations of several museums that have been built to archive, celebrate, and teach the history of popular music. It investigates how the popular music museum declines certain conventions of materiality, space, and audience in order to align its provision with its subject. And it argues that, despite the need for adjustment, popular music is not essentially incompatible with the museum but, in fact, provides a compelling example of how the contemporary museum is animated, and sometimes bested, by the demands of today’s pluralistic and media-rich society.
Through its investigation of the arresting experiment of the popular music museum project as it has evolved over the last twenty years, this thesis proposes to answer two central questions: How does popular music reframe the provision of the museum? How do media influence or inform this process? It is in answering these questions that the thesis opens up to a more general consideration of how the popular music museum stands as a lesson for other museums as they face the shared predicament of the twenty-first century, and argues that the popular music museum is an instructive example that illuminates the dilemma of adaptation, specifically within a world of rapidly changing media.

The popular music museum’s identification with media is directly linked to the museum’s subject itself being a form of mass media, but equally significant are its use of interactive media within its exhibitions and its reliance on networked media to establish connections within an audience that comes to it online, from within a broader mediascape. The title of the thesis, *When Media Becomes Form*, offers recognition of the constitutive role of media for the popular music museum. It also hints at the tension between process and edifice that continues to haunt expectations about what a museum is or should be. There is a kind of archaic understanding of the museum that ignores the many significant changes it has undergone as a result of sustained and productive conversations about inclusiveness, accessibility, and ethical responsibilities, which still sometimes echoes in repudiations of the popular music museum that are made in the name of the living culture of popular music. *When Media Becomes Form* does not argue for or against the popular music museum but rather seeks to uncover its specificity and its significance within the museum sector as a new museum type. Thus, inductively, the more general observations about the role media play in reshaping the museum emerge from the specific research about the popular music museum.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland), the Experience Music Project (Seattle) and the British Music Experience (London) are the central case studies for this thesis. The fieldwork for this investigation included five site visits and thirteen interviews
with museum professionals (curators, directors of education, and media specialists), as well as archival research and exhibition critiques. It is by means of these case studies that this thesis provides an analysis of the distinctive way in which the popular music museum realises collection, exhibition and visitation. In terms of collections, it attempts to show how the popular music museum, by finding value in mass-produced objects, engages the social imaginary of a culture informed by celebrity and personal participation. In terms of exhibitions, it reveals how, by allowing a sense of co-ownership of the cultural narrative, the popular music museum produces an authentic ‘congregant space’, And, finally, with regard to visitation, it argues that the popular music museum, having recognized that it cannot contain the visitor’s relationship to its subject within the space of the museum, embraces a notion of the extended visit that allows its audience to engage the museum from within the everyday and facilitates the museum’s encounter with the amateur expertise that exists beyond its walls. And yet, while these insights are a consequence of the specific situation of the popular music museum, each nonetheless also speaks to (and might inform) more general conversations about the role of objects, space, and audience in museum practice today.

The influence of media is made visible through the observation and analysis of the popular music museum’s reframing of provision. After having examined how the museum adapts by engaging the social imaginary, using the exhibition to occasion heritage, and embracing distributed expertise, the thesis concludes by proposing the use of terminology borrowed from computation to describe the reframed provision. Thus, what emerges in the final chapter is a language of ‘assets’ (rather than collections), ‘platform’ (rather than exhibition), and even ‘dynamic array’ (instead of visit), which together project a greater sensitivity to the information age. These metaphors are employed in order to highlight specific media effects but also to encourage discussion of the wider implications of this thesis. First, that new museum types such as the popular music museum will emerge from within media cultures, testing the elasticity of the term ‘museum’ as they give rise to new formats and forms. Second, that the museum benefits
from viewing its relationship to media as constitutive rather than additive. And third, that as media suffuses the everyday life of the museum and the visibility of ‘the digital’ begins to fade, media itself may emerge as the museum’s core provision.

1.2 Intellectual Context

This investigation is situated at the crossroads of three disciplines: museum, media, and popular music studies. It uses the notion of core provision—collection, exhibition, and visitation—to organize and analyse the research findings derived from its three case studies. It examines the collecting practices of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Experience Music Project’s approach to exhibiting popular music, and the British Music Experience’s framework for visitation. However, the structure of this thesis has been established with awareness that the practical reality of its subject will ultimately defy any neat categorisation and so tries to avoid any overly reductive alignment of the contextualising disciplines and the museum’s core provision.

Relevant debates and discussions from within each of the three disciplines that constitute the backdrop to this study are selectively highlighted and woven together in order to help analyse how the popular music museum is organised and operates, and to explain what the popular music museum shows us about the changing shape of the twenty-first-century museum. Each case study is framed by two themes: one representing a general challenge to the museum associated with popular culture (mass production, the vernacular, or the multimodal), the other introducing one of the specific challenges presented by popular music (the personal, non-monumental, and the contested). This approach retains a sense of the complexity of the subject while allowing us to methodically analyse some of its most important and interesting aspects. It also allows us to build an interdisciplinary thesis that speaks to the specific character of both popular music and the museum. (Appendix 1 provides illustration of how the themes derived from the intellectual context are ‘inherited’ by the case study chapters and used to build the thesis.)
The discipline of museum studies provides the context for thinking about how the traditions for establishing the heritage value of the collection are challenged by the popular music museum’s relation to the mass-produced materials of popular culture. Kevin Moore’s *Museums and Popular Culture* (1997) stands at the centre of this discussion alongside the work of Susan Pearce (1995) and Paul Martin (1999). This research, which evolved in relation to James Clifford’s ‘Art-Culture System’, has provided the basic framework for thinking about collecting and reckoning the value of popular culture. Because so little scholarly work on popular culture and the museum has been done since the late 1990s, this framework has persisted without significant revision despite major transformations of the cultural formations and media landscape of popular culture over the last two decades.

Before identifying how the discussions within museum and popular music studies inform the themes associated with each case study, a few remarks on what is meant by ‘popular culture’ are in order. In everyday conversation or use popular culture is usually identified with one or the other of the practices it comprises. But once it is employed in a more abstract fashion, the impossibility of tracing a smooth outline immediately becomes apparent. The difficulty of establishing a simple definition of popular culture has been routinely noted in many of the central academic texts on the topic (Fiske 1989; Storey 2006; Bennett 1980; Strinati 2004; Gans 1999) but has also served as an incentive to formulate a working definition equal to the complexity of its subject.

In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (2006), John Storey usefully identifies six approaches that have shaped discussions of what constitutes popular culture. These include the identification of the term ‘popular’ with: the quantitative; the residual (what does not meet the standards of high culture); industrialization and mass culture; a sense of belonging to the people; a terrain upon which social relations between classes are negotiated; and, any culture created in the aftermath of the collapse of the distinction between high and low culture precipitated by postmodernism’s incredulity toward
metanarratives. Storey also points out that the various approaches share the assumption that popular culture is historically tied to industrialization and urbanization because they fundamentally changed relations of employment, class and social control (2006, 12–13). An earlier contribution by American sociologist Herbert Gans makes the link with modernity even more obvious by emphasizing the importance of the emergence of leisure time and commercialized leisure activities for the proliferation of popular culture (1999 xii).

While some scholars have called into question the centrality of the historical context of urbanized industrialized culture, suggesting that the term popular culture can productively be applied to eras such as the Medieval or Renaissance (Parker 2011) or cultures that are more routinely referred to as ‘folk cultures’ (Fedorak 2009), this seems to de-historicize the phenomenon, and most certainly stretches the definition beyond the requirements of the current context. However, other discussions more usefully expand the definition of popular culture by highlighting aspects such as the adaptive or improvisational approach people take when engaging with it (Strinati 2004), and the impact of recent changes in media formats, structures and infrastructures (Beer 2013, van Dijck 2004), prove fundamental to the definition of popular culture employed here.

Because of the influence of changing media technology and consumer capitalism’s ideology of novelty it is imprudent to identify popular culture with any one economic institution or social formation. Thus, the definition employed here is fashioned in order to be able to take into account both structure and agency and explain popular culture’s shifting hegemony.

Drawing upon the various engagements which form the broad context of the topic, it is possible to propose a general definition of popular culture as: a field of media-based cultural practices that are integrated with everyday life and bear a relation to a commercial infrastructure, either by giving rise to it, re-using it, or resisting it. It is a segmented and
variegated social space within which people negotiate communal life and self-understanding. Such a definition is valuable because it recognizes key features of popular music (the genre of popular culture at issue here) such as, the centrality of media and commerce, the significance of the everyday, and its communicative complexity but also provides for the wider field within which it sits. Like the scholarship from which it derives, this definition also avoids turning the term ‘popular’ into a vehicle of aesthetic judgment and instead offers it as an umbrella term under which specific determinations regarding social significance, historical importance or political implication might be made. Thus, it provides a framework for contextualizing what the research has identified as the challenges popular culture poses for the museum, and provides a sense of the intellectual background of the investigations undertaken with museum, media and popular music studies.

Popular collecting provides the intellectual context for the second theme derived from the literature: the influence of vernacular culture on museum provision. This aspect of the inquiry builds jointly on the literature on individual collecting grounded in psychoanalysis (Muensterberger 1995) and consumer research (Belk 1995), the work done at the University of Leicester in the 1990s (Pearce 1995; Moore 1997; Martin 1999), and the research focusing specifically on record collecting (Straw 1997; Beer 2008; Shuker 2010). This research is used to explain how non-institutional collecting sets the stage for the popular music museum’s collecting practices and mediations of value. Evoking Raymond Williams’s contention that ‘culture is ordinary’, we employ Sharon Macdonald’s use of the phrase ‘ordinary collecting’ to distinguish between public and private sites of collecting, and help distinguish the approach and context from the sort of materials which are collected (2006).

This focus on the vernacular as it pertains to ordinary collecting practices is, of course, a rather specific use of the term. However, it is consistent with the broader context of cultural studies within which the meaning of the term has developed and is essential for
providing grounds for the discussion of how online collecting practices of fans influences the refashioning of the museum visit (in Chapter 6).

In the broader context of cultural studies the term ‘vernacular’ has been used to discuss speech, cinema, architecture, urban economic development and styles of online communication. In one of the earliest reflections on the topic anthropologist Margaret Lantis (1960), identified the vernacular as a specific set of values, behaviours and artefacts belonging to a segment of a complex society. This part-whole relation that lends definition to specific segment of culture as ‘vernacular’ has elsewhere been described as constituting ‘an entangled space in which ‘popular’ and ‘official’ world views are constantly antagonizing in shifting patterns of authority and subversion’ (Mercer 2007, 10).

With specific reference to musical knowledge, the vernacular has been identified with extracurricular learning (Tagg 2012), or used to denote the ‘broad musical-cultural field encompassing many genres and practices’ which exists adjacent to ‘more formal, institutional contexts’ (O’Flynn 2006, 141). Both applications recognize the local and participatory nature of the vernacular but stop short of examining its integration within everyday life in the detailed manner pioneered by DeNora (2000) who, interestingly, does not employ the term at all.

The importance of ‘localization’ and the alignment with the everyday noted in the earlier work on the topic has also been interpreted as a means of resisting subordination within oppressive class structures (Pickering and Green 1987). Looked at from this perspective, the vernacular can be framed as a domain of musical practice within which professional and commercial interests are essentially insignificant, or play a very minor role. While the importance of the extra-economic value of the vernacular aspects of popular music has also been acknowledged by several theorists (Edensor 2009; Burgess 2006) theories that define the vernacular according to this tendency have also been critiqued for creating ‘an aura of authenticity or purity around everyday creative practices’ (Burgess 2009, 118).
In this thesis, the term vernacular is used to recognize the location of certain collecting and archiving practices that are associated with everyday life. That such practices are often ‘organized by individuals and groups who ask little or no economic return, since they are gifting their work to the community or engaging in it as a shared expressive practice’ (Markusen 2009, 186) is an observation that is relevant to the discussion in Chapter 6. However, several contradictions that beset the constitution of cultural heritage through vernacular culture’s ‘amateur expertise’ are identified and discussed in that chapter and conclude that these contradictions challenge any association of the vernacular with an inherent authenticity or a potential to operate entirely autonomously. Thus, the use of the term here is oriented toward non-institutional practices that are elaborated within the context of everyday life but not as some ideal (imaginary) external other.

A third theme inherited from the museum studies literature issues from recent efforts to rethink museum space in terms of visitor experience, placing emphasis on navigation and trajectories through space (Basu 2007; Hillier and Tzortzi 2007), the creation of dramatic intensities (Skolnick 2012) and the importance of exhibition design (MacLeod, Dodd, and Duncan 2015a) as well as contributions that draw attention to the role of media in shaping and reshaping display conventions (Witcomb 2003; Kidd 2014), introducing interactivity and the influence of the virtual (Parry 2007; Henning 2006). In the literature review this discussion begins with Chris Bruce’s Spectacle and Democracy: Experience Music Project as Post-Museum (2006), a pivotal article for establishing the popular music museum’s dialogue with technology as a conversation about changing understanding of artefacts, access, and audience. Bruce appropriates and inverts Debord’s notion of the spectacle in order to make a sweeping claim that the experience of the popular music museum produces a model of democratic heritage. This thesis focuses on this theme at a lower level of generalisation, examining how the Experience Music Project designs exhibitions in order to facilitate specific kinds of messages and audience involvements. Instead of following Bruce in the use of the term ‘spectacle’, it
employs the term ‘multimodal’ to describe the revised spatial provision of the popular music museum. This term speaks to the identification of media as integral to the popular music museum’s exhibitions as well as allowing for the introduction of social semiotic discourse analysis (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; Lindstrand and Insulander 2012) as a methodology suitable for interpreting the effects of this transformation.

Popular music studies provides the second intellectual tradition that informs this investigation and contributes to it the themes of contested ownership, personal memory and meaning, and non-monumentality. All three of these themes derive from the sociological side of the study of popular music. In fact, little of the musicological approach makes its way into this investigation in large part because, as we shall see, the popular music museum is not principally about music but about music history and music cultures. The vocabulary of the musical text—itself an interdisciplinary invention drawn from related fields such as semiotics, literary criticism, and aesthetics—speaks to the forms, structures, and performance of songs in ways that are not readily mapped onto the museum. Rather, it is popular music studies’ exploration of how music influences self, cohort, community, and the various ‘nested cultural formations’ (Turino 2008) that helps us understand the challenges to which the museum must adapt.

Contested ownership of the cultural narrative has played a significant role in how the social meaning of popular music has been delineated within popular music studies. It’s an ever-evolving field of inquiry which has in recent years benefited from the introduction of original new conceptual frameworks by scholars such as Georgina Born (2010), Thomas Turino (2008), and Julian Henriques (2011). Many contributions can be traced back to the seminal work of the Birmingham School under the direction of Stuart Hall, or to the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Subculture, the key concept developed by the Birmingham School (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979), represents a politicised challenge to cultural elitism, one which affirms the value of vernacular culture as a site of innovation and potential resistance to prevailing hegemony. Although
later critiqued for its limited understanding of cultural differences pertaining to gender, sexuality, and race and revised through the development of related concepts which describe the social alignments associated with popular music as ‘scenes’ (Straw 1991) and ‘milieux’ (Webb 2007), the centrality of the term has ensured the continued visibility of the notion of contest and competition within the cultural realm. Bourdieu’s notions of ‘cultural capital’ and ‘habitus’, which originated in a discussion of how class distinctions were created and expressed in relation to cultural materials, also served to install the notion of contested ownership at the heart of popular music studies.

At the same time as these concepts speak to various forms of symbolic competition as integral to popular music culture, they also highlight how meaning is made at the level of the everyday, and not simply within the more obvious public context of mass media platforms such as radio, television, and magazines. In order to examine how the more personal aspects of meaning and memory are organised in relation to popular music, we draw upon several landmark empirical studies of music and everyday life (Finnegan 1989; DeNora 2000; Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil 1993) and other studies of everyday involvement with music which trace the links between music and memory (Pickering and Keightley 2006; van Dijck 2006; van der Hoeven 2014; Brandellero et al. 2013) and help establish the role personal meaning plays in determining cultural value as a challenge for the museum.

A third theme builds on the work done on music ‘scenes’ (Straw 1991; Cohen 1991; Shank 1994; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015) and the musical geographies concerned with the ‘sites’ of popular music (Connell and Gibson 2003; Leyshon and Matless 1995; Cohen 2015), which demonstrate how both are complex, dynamic, and subject to multiple layers of mediation that encourage highly personal attachments.

This research is used in tandem with Henri Lefèbvre’s discussion of monumentality as the ‘singular spatial representation of collective identity’ (Lefebvre 1991, 221) in order to elaborate on what has been described as ‘non-monumental space’ (Cvoro 2006). This
proves to be a key concept for investigating the museum’s exhibition provision, which, it is argued, can serve as a site for occasioning cultural heritage.

Because the analysis of the Experience Music Project in Chapter 5 concludes that the non-monumental space of the exhibition makes it possible for it to serve as an authentic congregant space, some explanation of the particular use of the term ‘authenticity’ is in order.

The idea of ‘authenticity’, of a thing being genuine or bearing a direct and immediate relation to it origins, may seem anachronistic in a discussion of popular music, a form of cultural expression in which technologies of mechanical reproduction, performative artifice and commercial concern play a central role. However, authenticity is a protean term that has appeared and reappeared within discussions of popular music in a range of guises. It has variously represented: a resistance to commercialization; an intertwining of social and aesthetic concerns; a subversive or transgressive tendency; a rejection of artifice; or, a spontaneous, shared embodied experience of music (Whiteley 1992, Hamm 1995). Authenticity’s use as a foundation for the ‘rock canon’—which routinely marginalizes musical practices associated with woman and queers (Straw 1997)— and its tendency to fetishistically identify African-Americans with experiences rendered in essentialist terms as either organic or dispossessed, has been subject to several rigorous critiques (Pickering 1986; Gracyk 1996; Keightley 2001; King 2006). In the wake of this demystification of ‘authenticity’ and its use to support certain authoritative account of popular music cultural memory, several more recent contributions have identified ways that the concept persists in a mode that involves a knowing relation to the constructed value of particular artists, artifacts, performances or aesthetic operations (Thornton 1995; Moore 2002; Wisenthaunet and Lindberg 2010), a mode that might be characterized as ‘experiential authenticity’. It is this later approach to authenticity that renders it useful in the context of this thesis, not only because it rejects essentialism but also because in recognizing its constructed-ness it makes comparison with the use of the term within museum studies possible.
The use of the term ‘authenticity’ in the world of museums has its own history. Museums define authenticity in a more formal manner through specialized administrative operations designed to establish the authenticity of the objects in their collections. One important set of operations involves verifying attribution and provenance; another relates to conservation and classification. These are processes through which material culture is subject to abstraction so that its symbolic value can be established (Carman 2010). Unlike the claims within popular music made on behalf of expressive authenticity or taste discriminations, many museums use processes of authentication that are formal and institutional and focus on the object and its history.

These processes are not without their complications, however. As David Phillips has pointed out in his book *Exhibiting Authenticity* (1998), historically the museum’s sense of authenticity has been tied to judgements, evaluations or ‘feats of discrimination’ which serve as the expression of expert knowledge (1998, 29). However, in what Phillips has called ‘the connoisseurs’ paradox’, the expert’s assessment of the authenticity of the artwork or artefact which is treated as belonging to the formal properties of the object also requires a ‘more intuitive assessment of aesthetic experience’ (1998, 35) in order to be confirmed.

Phillips investigation of how the museum world understands and uses the notion of ‘authenticity’ concludes with the observation that:

> ‘what art historians conservators and curators do cannot usefully be explained in terms of authenticity, but does make sense if thought of as a mapping of the production and meaning of artworks, and of something like performance in their re-presentation’ (197).

This observation, along with Phillips’ contention that theories of framing (such as those of Mary Douglas, Erving Goffman and Gregory Bateson) highlight how the intersection of the museum’s distinct frame of reference (as a symbolic space supporting the re-pre-
sentation of cultural objects) and the museum visitor’s frame (which brings personal experience into the mapping process), establishes a context within which it is possible to understand and experience ‘authenticity’ in a non-essentialist fashion.

In recent years, the heritage sector has increasingly come to recognize ‘authenticity’ as having a composite character (Hede, Garma, Josiassen and Thyne 2014). In addition to the authenticity of artistic expression or the object and its history, it has acknowledged the importance of collective traditions and the defining power of social actions in the constitution of the social reality of the museum. This notion of authenticity as having a composite character made up of several dimensions—not just things or expressions but also collective traditions, experiences and performances—has even secured official recognition through ICOMOS approval of the ‘Nara Document on Authenticity’ (1994) and the ‘International Declaration of Jerusalem’ (2006). It is this sort of understanding of authenticity as process (Sjorslev 2013) or continuum (Chhabra 2008), irreducible to any single criteria but rather a quality that is cultivated in reference to a specific frame, a product of sociality rather than materiality, that we draw on in this thesis to explain how conventions of materiality, space and visitation take shape within the popular music museum.

Finally, while media studies is not used in quite the same manner as the two other contextualising disciplines, it nevertheless brings something essential to the discussion of popular music’s challenge to the museum tradition. It provides critical points of reference for understanding the influence of media on the broader social-historical context within which the museum sits—both in terms of network culture (Castells 2010) and the normalisation of the forms of engagement structured by the media platforms that have come to define the ‘social’ within many discussions of contemporary culture (van Dijck 2013). Equally important are those discussions that help us understand how the use of media within the museum (Witcomb 2003; Henning 2006) transforms its identity, as well as those that recognise museums as media makers (Parry 2007; Kidd 2014).
Another concept that informs this thesis without being directly and explicitly addressed as a central theme is that of the ‘visitor-centred’ museum. Born of the critical thinking that characterised ‘the new museology’ (Vergo 1989) and reflective of the concerns about inclusiveness, equity, and coalition that arose from within the cultural politics of the 1990s, the notion of the visitor-centred museum has come to represent a general interest in defining the museum as a public institution hospitable to the plurality of experience and encouraging of audience participation (Gurian 2006; Hein 2006; Sandell 2002). And it is into a world of museum practice suffused with the values associated with the concept of the visitor-centred museum that the popular music museum came into being.

As a museum concerned with an art form originating within African-American communities, the popular music museum is undeniably tied to questions of cultural hybridity (Hamm 1995; Mbaye and Hall 2013). As a culture forged from technologies of mechanical reproduction and networks of commercial distribution, born of media and continually reconfigured through technological innovation and corresponding changes in business practice (Katz 2004), popular music makes it impossible to evaluate its quality according to the criteria established by cultural elites in reference to the fine arts (Middleton 1990). Thus, the popular music museum would seem to share a natural affinity with the visitor-centred museum’s identity as a democratic and inclusive institution, one that breaks with elite and culturally homogeneous traditions to become more truly representative of the diverse, multicultural societies shaping twenty-first-century citizenship. And while for the most part this proves to be the case, the contradictions and points of resistance that become evident through the analysis of the case studies remind us that the creation of genuinely public spaces and the advance of democratic values are not an automatic outcome of participation, access, or the dissolution of hierarchical distinctions.

Despite the obvious relevance of the popular music museum to a number of the key currents within museum studies, there has been no deep or sustained research on this
topic. At the outset of the research project there was little that had been published on either the popular music museum or popular music as cultural heritage. In the last three years a number of publications have appeared from within popular music studies and cultural industries programmes, providing groundbreaking empirical research and theoretical frameworks for examining popular music’s cultural heritage. And yet even within this context there is—with the notable exception of the work of Marion Leonard—still very little research on the relation of popular music to the museum. This thesis seeks, in part, to remedy this omission or oversight.

1.3 Research Methodology

Exploratory visits to the Experience Music Project and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inspired the development of this research project. After surveying the sector (see Appendix 2), it became apparent that a wide range of different-sized popular music museums existed—each with a distinct organisational structure and public purpose. Entertaining the idea that the popular music museum might represent a new type of museum, the range of possible case studies was purposefully narrowed so that the ones selected would form a set. Thus, the decision was made to concentrate on museums with professional accreditation and encyclopedic scope, exclude those that focused exclusively on a specific genre, artist, or national history. It was also decided that each of the central case studies should be an independent purpose-built museum rather than a department in a larger institution.

This research project employed a mixed methods approach to the fieldwork undertaken at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland), the Experience Music Project (Seattle), and the British Music Experience (London), and an interdisciplinary methodology in its analysis and presentation of the findings. The fieldwork included semi-structured interviews with people responsible for exhibition and educational programmes, and with those who manage the museum’s information infrastructure. The interview subjects include James Henke, former Vice-President of Exhibitions at the Rock and Roll Hall
of Fame; Jasen Emmons, Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Experience Music Project; Paul Lilley, Curator of the British Music Experience; and Andy Leach, Director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archive. A series of site visits, lasting from two to four days, allowed multiple visits to each museum, including repeat visits to special exhibitions such as *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* at the Experience Music Project and *Women Who Rock* at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. (A complete list of interview subjects is provided in Appendix 3, and exhibitions in Appendix 4.) Information acquired through the visits and interviews was combined with data from annual reports and various popular and social media sources in order to create institutional histories of each of the case study museums.

The interviews were conducted in accordance with the University of Leicester’s Research Ethics Code of Practice and used a consistent set of questions about artefacts, collection management, exhibitions, audiences, and the use of technology. Use of the same key questions in each interview helped make visible the differences and similarities in approach of each institution to collection, exhibition, and visitation. The questions addressed to the curators of the online heritage sites interviewed for Chapter 6 were, necessarily, of a different character, and took into account both the more personal nature of their role in the creation of popular music cultural heritage and the more immediate availability of usage data.

The case study approach was selected because of its suitability for answering the sorts of how and why questions driving this inquiry, and for providing the means to integrate direct observation and the use of interviews (Yin 2003). Although the use of the case study interview has been recognised as valuable for its ability to describe and explain individual behaviour (Hyde, Ryan, and Woodside 2012), it was not employed primarily for that purpose here. With one exception¹, each individual interviewed for this investigation spoke as a representative of his or her institution and, as such, gave what the literature

¹ Dave Rosencranz was a curator at the Experience Music Project from 1999 to 2003 but was the Exhibitions Manager of Chihuly Studio at the time of the interview.
(Hyde, Ryan, and Woodside 2012, 174) refers to as ‘executive interviews’, performed on behalf of the institution in a scripted manner. Because our purpose was to build case studies that could allow understanding of the structure, evolution, and operation of these museums, the ‘impression management’ that occurs in executive interviews did not present a problem. However, it is important to avoid reification and acknowledge that the phenomenon being investigated (the popular music museum) involves people whose actions, feelings, and effects are only partially defined by their script. Such an acknowledgement further reinforces the value of employing case study methodology, for not only does it support approaches that are ‘holistic, thick…naturalistic’ (Gerring 2006, 17), it also allows a kind of intimacy with the materials and preserves the character of what is being studied.

The case study method has been adapted here in order to create a composite image of the popular music museum by aligning one institution with each provision. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame provides the basis for the discussion of the collection; the Experience Music Project provides materials for analysing exhibition practice; and the British Music Experience serves as the context for investigating the evolution of visitation. This allows for intensive study of the individual case and provides the sense of perspective gained through cross-case analysis. And, by using just three cases, it does so without risking the loss of significance that can result from including too large a sample (Gerring 2006, 20). This approach allows us to observe the shape of each museum and apprehend the outline of the popular music museum as a ‘type’. The deep dive into the particular provision permits an examination that is detailed enough to appreciate its contours and texture in a way that provides a sense of the forces and the rhythms that run through it.

Case study methodology is also valuable because it readily lends itself to an interdisciplinary analysis of the research results. In this investigation, themes from the intellectual context are brought into each chapter in order to frame the discussion of the provision.
Each chapter ‘inherits’ two themes from the scholarly literature: one theme that relates directly to a defining property of popular music and another that is characteristic of popular culture in general. Thus, each case study chapter is able to situate the particular institution within a broader cultural context and observe how it responds to and is conditioned by it. Additionally, each chapter draws upon theories familiar to the disciplines that provide the context of this investigation—museum, popular music, and media studies—in order to create localized theoretical instruments to analyse and reveal the significance of the research findings.

As with any case study research, questions arise regarding what can reasonably be inferred from the specific examples and whether there are sufficient grounds for generalisation (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2009). Because the popular music museum sector, although rapidly expanding, still remains relatively small, the three case studies presented here represent roughly half the existing museums of the encyclopedic type. Thus, the observations drawn from this research are ensured a direct relation and, hopefully, relevance for the sector. Relatedly, this methodology also always raises questions about how many features of the case can successfully be studied (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2009). The density of the fieldwork, which comprises interviews, site visits, exhibition critiques, and extensive background research, ensures that the findings and general observations about the way popular music reshapes museum provision emerge from the specific research done in the field. Using the three case studies, the analysis turns its attention to one of the central provisions of the museum: collection, exhibition, and visitation. This allows an in-depth analysis of each while simultaneously providing a composite overview of the popular music museum as a specific type of heritage institution.

1.4 Structure

Because the analysis of each provision operates at a specific scale, starting with the object, then moving to the exhibition and on to the surrounding mediascape, the overall
structure of this thesis could be described in reference to the metaphor of a cinematic zoom—smoothly moving outward from close-up to panoramic shot.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland) to examine how the popular music museum holds and organises items in a collection and how the material and immaterial dimensions of those ‘things’ are entangled. Looking at representative artefacts from the collection requires a tool that can illuminate the issues related to both the object and the collection. What is needed is a lens that can deliver a good close-up but is also capable of opening up to allow a wider shot. Artefact analysis as developed within by Pearce (1995) and Moore (1997) fulfills both of these requirements and combines readily with theories of symbolic value (Latham 2007; Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011; Thrift 2008) and thus serves as the primary methodology for Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, the thesis moves from artefact to site, using the Experience Music Project (Seattle) to move from close-up to master shot. The primary example in this chapter is the Experience Music Project’s exhibition Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses, which is analysed using the methodology provided by Linstrand and Insulander (2008), who apply Gunther Kress’s social semiotics to museum exhibitions. This method enables an examination of the exhibition site as a multimodal communicative event comprising multiple layers of meaning moving through several media channels.

Chapter 6 looks at the British Music Experience (London), focusing specifically on its smartcard-enabled extension of the museum visit. It examines the landscape into which this extension relocates the visit, taking into account the other sorts of heritage initiatives that exist there. The focus here is specifically on the world of connective media (digital, networked, and social) at a scale that is broader than a user study but less encompassing than an analysis of an entire media ecosystem. In cinematic terms, it is a long shot or panorama but not an aerial view. Here, methods for online observation analysis provided by Nørskov and Rask (2011) and van Dijck (2013) help us examine
the structure of the network-enabled visit and situate it within the broader context of online popular music heritage.

Taken together, the three case studies demonstrate how the popular music museum’s adaptations to its subject entail: the affirmation of the value of the mass-produced artefact and the affective power of personal memory; the use of multimodal techniques that enable it to create non-monumental exhibitions that occasion heritage; and an embrace of the embedded vernacular knowledge and amateur expertise which exist within its source communities.

Having demonstrated how popular music stretches and restyles museum provision, *When Media Becomes Form* concludes by highlighting the role of mass, interactive, and network media in that process. It draws attention to the constitutive character of media for the popular music museum, and suggests that the language of computation might prove useful for dramatizing the particular effects of integrating this new content into the existing museum format. But, before the slow zoom from close-up to panorama begins—directing attention to artefact and then exhibition, and from exhibition to mediascape—we will set the scene by outlining the central challenges that popular culture and, more specifically, popular music culture represent for the museum. And so it is to the work of scene setting that we now turn.
Chapter 2 The Challenge of Popular Culture

2.1 Introduction

Dialogue about contemporary popular culture and the modern museum has been intermittent and dispersed, but several themes appear and reappear across the intervals. This chapter highlights three key themes found within that itinerant discussion and uses them to establish a framework for investigating the relationship of popular culture to the museum. Each theme simultaneously represents a particular aspect of popular culture that challenges the conventions of the museum, while also serving as a defining characteristic of popular music. The three themes are the mass-produced, the multimodal, and the vernacular.

Each theme has been retrieved from a multidisciplinary body of research that addresses the topic of this chapter: the museum and popular culture. This includes a relatively small body of museum studies literature which takes popular culture and the museum as its subject (Adam 1939; F. Schroeder 1981; Mayo 1984; Bott 1985; Moore 1997; Bruce 2006), as well as literature that considers the museum within a broader cultural context that includes popular culture but does not make it a specific focus of research (Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Bennett 1995; McLean 1999; Parry 2007; Witcomb 2003; Henning 2006). It also draws upon cultural, media, and popular music studies to clarify specific dimensions of the encounter of the museum with popular culture.

Mass-produced materials are characteristic of popular culture but challenge the museum’s conventions for collecting, classifying, and establishing the authenticity of material culture. These challenges are discussed here in reference to the work of the UK Social History Curators Group (Bott 1985), and cultural anthropologist James Clifford, whose writings on museum value (1988) have exercised significant influence on subsequent writings on popular culture and the museum (Moore 1997; Brabazon and Mallinder 2006; Leonard 2007). The challenge of mass-produced materials is also discussed in
reference to the literature on ordinary collecting (Belk 1991; Muensterberger 1994; Pearce 1995; Martin 1997) and the way it connects the museum with everyday life.

The challenge represented by the vernacular is initially made visible within a discussion of the research on the way canonical values inform the practices and self-perception of individual record collectors (Straw 1997; Shuker 2010). It is then situated within the broader context of ‘negotiated meaning’ (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Gledhill 1988) elaborated in reference to the concept of ‘subculture’ proposed by Dick Hebdige (1979) and developed by researchers associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. Initially offered as an explanation for the way in which popular culture mediates the relations of various social groups and serves as a bridge between the individual and their social world, subculture is useful for discussing certain aspects of audience involvement but proves limited for analysing the influence of media technologies on these relations.

A third challenge facing the museum in its encounter with popular culture occurs when it attempts to adjust its provision to accommodate the multimodal nature of popular culture communication. Hooper-Greenhill’s theory of the ‘post-museum’ (2000) stands at the centre of this discussion, outlining how the museum’s changing form makes its content something for the visitor to encounter rather than consider. The literature on the influence of media technology in shaping the experiential museum (Witcomb 2003; Henning 2006; Parry 2009) extends this conversation and provides background for thinking about how the museum might operate within the distributive context of popular culture. In order to support an analysis of the museum’s onsite exhibition practices—which has also been influenced by the multimodal character of popular culture—this thesis draws upon a growing body of museum design research literature (MacLeod, Dodd, and Duncan 2015a) and uses it in combination with multimodal discourse analysis (Kress 2010; Diamantopolou, Insulander, and Lindstrand 2012).
In addition to clarifying how concerns relating to the specific topic of popular music scale up to the broader field of popular culture, these three themes also show us something about how critical theories sometimes ‘amplify tensions’ (Witcomb 2003,18) in ways that can sometimes obscure emerging possibilities.

A review of the literature helps contextualize and establish the relevance of these themes and equips us with some theoretical instruments to be used in analysing the case studies. By selecting scalable themes that both possess significance within the general context of popular culture and apply directly to popular music, this chapter sets the stage for the more focused review of the challenges represented for the museum by popular music, which follow in the next chapter.

2.2 New standards of excellence

In the 1939 publication *The Museum and Popular Culture*, Thomas R. Adam makes no secret of his antipathy toward the idea of the museum as an institution belonging to the rich.

> When private wealth and taste seek to dictate to the community through a rigidly controlled foundation, the resulting institution should be classed as a show place rather than a true museum. (Adam, 1939, 19)

Museums, Adam claims, should be ‘expressions of group life instead of lofty missionaries to the cultural heathen’ and should most certainly not be showcases for the ‘wealthy dilettanti’ (19). It is better to think of them as ‘community enterprises’ and recognize their value as ‘instruments of democratic culture’ (5) and the ‘popularisation of social advantages’ (16).

Popular culture for Adam was a ‘common culture’ belonging to communities. He saw it as encompassing interest in ‘history as a hobby’, nature lore and scientific knowledge produced through direct encounter, industrial arts, and moving pictures, and as a
vehicle of the increasing presence of women in public life. While he makes few specific comments about the contents or subject matter collected and exhibited by the museum, Adams does assert that:

A museum’s first duty, then, is to create essentially new standards of excellence for its community through its collections and their skillful arrangement. (Adam 1939, 53)

The creation of ‘new standards of excellence’ was clearly conceived as sustaining the museum’s overarching social and political responsibilities with respect to securing the ‘social victory of democratic over aristocratic principles’ (5).

One can glimpse a recursive line of thinking in Adam’s treatise on making the museum more publicly accountable, one that connects popularisation to democracy but leaves ‘popular culture’ rather vaguely defined. (It is the organisational structure of the museum that demands the greater share of Adam’s attention and so it is the development of democratic policies that fare best within his treatise.) The historical context in which Adam was writing, informed by the ongoing deprivation of the Depression and the rising tide of European fascism, explains the urgency of his interest in ‘arousing the community to a sense of democratic need in the sharing of artistic and intellectual culture’ (Adam 1939, 16). Despite the limitations in defining his terms, Adam offers two flashing insights into the place of the museum within the broader context of popular culture. One issues from within his recognition of the museum’s ‘close relation to the social pattern’ that puts it on a continuum with party politics and the cinema (16). For Adam, the museum is not a mausoleum but a mirror of the fast-moving world of innovation and change. The other insight pertains to a relation the museum might establish to those social and historical forces which it necessarily reflects. For Adam, not only does the museum play a reflective role in relation to technology and industry—social realities that are in the ‘grim business of reacting unpredictably on the lives of nearly everyone’—
it offers a space of abstraction in which society can reflect upon, and perhaps even resolve, the issues that arise in the wake of the forces of ‘progress’ (Adam 1939, 124).

With little to say about popular culture in the museum, Adam nevertheless clearly articulates a position for the museum within popular culture, and even suggests that the museum itself might be thought of as a form of popular culture. In seeking to establish an authentic and authentically democratic communal heritage, he identifies popular culture with a democratizing impulse that stands in opposition to ‘aristocratic principles’ (Adam 1939, 5). This directly links the museum to the vernacular, and specifically those aspects of vernacular culture that absorb the influence of mass media.

Recognition of the importance of what today we call ‘experiential learning’ is evident in both Adam’s discussion of the museum as an expression of group life and in his reflections on how knowledge is created through study of the natural world. We might see in this a foreshadowing of our contemporary concern with multimodal literacy that situates the visual and textual within a communicative context that also includes aural, somatic, and gestural information (Kress 2003; 2010). At the same time, Adam sees the museum as an institution in which social patterns and forces can be considered abstractly and, through reflection, understood historically, thus presaging contemporary recognition of the museum as a space of abstraction and modelling (Parry 2010; O’Neill 2013).

The tension between popular culture and elite values, the importance of vernacular culture, and the concern for multimodal (informal and experiential) communication and learning are all themes we find repeated in the literature that continues Adam’s inquiry into the relation of the museum and popular culture (Schroeder 1981; Macdonald 1995; Moore 1997; Clayton 2002; Brabazon 2006; Bruce 2006; Funcke 2009). By beginning with these themes, we are able to contextualise our discussion of the popular music museum in a way that recognizes the influence of issues that are central to the study of
popular culture, without assuming the task of resolving that field’s stubborn problems of definition.

Even today, the study of popular culture continues to grapple with the contradictions that emerge as a result of the variety of ways in which it has been defined in reference to quantity, inclusiveness, mode of production, identification and attachment, and political effect. For instance, when defined in terms of the importance of reaching, influencing, and representing a large portion of a population (Storey 2006; Bennett 1980)—the quantitative definition—popular culture quickly comes into tension with another approach that looks to it to remedy the social exclusiveness and elitism of ‘high culture’ (Hall 1982; Williams 1976). Similarly, a critical approach to the ‘culture industries’ (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972) directs attention to the power relations inherent in the production of culture for commercial consumption—relations of domination which impose values and protect elite interests—but inevitably encounters the ‘negotiations of pleasure’ (Gledhill 1988) that highlight the agency involved in the reception and use of those cultural products. As a result, scholars of popular culture most often employ a framework that accepts the fluidity of its subject as ‘an ever-changing part of the political battleground from hegemony’ (Moore 1997, 2).

2.3 Mass-produced culture’s challenge to the museum

A number of reflections on twentieth-century popular culture were published in the 1980s recommending the use of the methods of archeology and ethnography to imagine how its mass-produced material culture might fit into the museum. These involved attempts to integrate popular cultural materials into established conceptual frameworks for museum collecting, as well as reflections on the impact of mass-produced material culture on those very frameworks. This section surveys the pioneering scholarship on popular culture and the museum that approaches the topic from the perspective of material culture in order to make recommendations for integration and address questions of authenticity.
New approaches to collection and classification

‘Popular culture is twentieth-century American culture’, claims Fred E.H. Schroeder in the introduction to *Twentieth Century Popular Culture in Museums and Libraries* (1981, 7). The ‘mass-produced, electronically mediated, disposable and commercialized consumer products’ which have undergone exponential growth since 1900 are historical documents and artefacts ‘whose value for the future is unquestionable’. (Schroeder 1981, 7). It is ‘appalling’, he declares, that the material culture of modern life—packaged foodstuff, Barbie dolls, collections of *Playboy*, recordings of cable news—which is so important for future understanding of the present is largely ‘ignored by museums and libraries’ (*Ibid.*, 7).

Inspired by the pioneering efforts of John Cotton Dana to include objects of industry and popular culture in the programmes of the Newark Museum in the early part of the twentieth century, as well as the curatorial work of Edith Mayo at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, Schroeder suggests a method for collecting popular culture artefacts which utilizes mail-order catalogues as a key resource. The mail-order catalogue that provides a ‘readymade indexing system’ and ‘uniquely provides the cultural context of a given artefact’ (Schroeder 1981, 77) is used not only to classify and interpret the mass-produced materials of popular culture but to purchase them as well. He suggests a rationale for selecting items for acquisition that is determined in reference to the ‘typical’ and the ‘representative’, an approach that shares in the thinking characteristic of ethnographic and folk museums, historical societies, and archives (*Ibid.*, 79–81). Consequently, Schroeder’s recommended method for acquiring, accessioning, and cataloguing sets aside normative aesthetic judgments along with any questions about the inherent value of popular culture.

Related discussions of contemporary culture artefacts—ranging from toys (Mergen 1984) to pop bottles (Gilborn 1989), from protest buttons (Orr and Ohno 1981) to motor vehicles (Duke 1981)—drew upon the historical approaches to material culture employed to interpret working-class life and the political events of earlier periods of
history. For Ronald T. Marchese, archeological classification proved useful when applied to mass-produced popular culture artefacts (such as Barbie), as it was able to both create consistency and infer changes in social values and attitudes (1980, 19). For Dewhurst and MacDowell (1981), the methodology employed by European folk museums, which drew distinctions between cultural-aesthetic criteria and classification based on categories corresponding to cultural groups (with subclasses corresponding to local variations), provided a useful model for organising collections of popular culture.

At roughly the same time in the UK, the Social History Curators Group had also come to recognise the need to interpret the objects of popular culture in increasingly specific terms (Bott 1985). The group’s publication of *Social History and Industrial Classification* (SHIC) classified materials in relation to four basic categories of human activity—community, domestic and family, personal, and working life—rather than in reference to more abstract categories such as type or media. However, because this approach was shaped by a politicized tradition of understanding popular culture in connection with everyday working-class life, it had the effect of maintaining a sense of continuity between popular culture of the twentieth century and the popular folk cultures of earlier eras rather than providing a distinction based on recognition of its mass production.

Thus, the success of initial efforts to imagine ways to integrate popular cultural materials into established conceptual frameworks for museum collecting proved far from definitive. The desire to establish shared standards underlying these various efforts remained unfulfilled and institutions were faced with considerable uncertainty about how to collect the recent past. Museum professionals feared personal bias and romantic nostalgia would, in the absence of shared criteria, unduly influence the collecting process, and expressed concern about the prospect of trying to establish collections when faced with massive quantities of available and often affordable cultural material (Bott 1985).
And, while earlier questions about the ‘worthiness of the popular arts’ (Rosenberg and White 1957) seem to have been dispersed by such investigations, the particular significance of mass production had, for the most part, only been indirectly addressed. Schroeder’s provocative question ‘What substance would there be if mass-produced commercial culture were removed from American life?’ continued to echo more or less unanswered (1981, 5). One noteworthy exception within the American literature was found in Edith Mayo’s essay ‘Connoisseurship of the Future’, in which she pointed out that one of the central effects of the museum using more mass-produced and mass-media artefacts to represent the culture is that ‘objects of the upper classes will be increasingly unrepresentative of the society as a whole’ (Mayo 1981).

**Redefining authenticity**

James Clifford’s *On Collecting Art and Culture* (1988), an influential theoretical contribution to the dialogue on museum value, has played a surprising central role in the discussion of popular culture and the museum. In answering the question of what ‘validates an authentic cultural artistic product’, Clifford offers an object-based explanation of how museum collecting creates a semantic zone within which objects are assigned relative value as authentic or inauthentic artefacts and masterpieces (*Ibid.*, 221). At the core of the system is an assumption about the value of scarcity and the inherent inauthenticity of mass-produced objects. While this would appear to make it an unlikely foundation upon which to rest a theory of popular cultural value, by providing a diagrammatic plotting of the ‘art-culture system’ it offers an indispensable tool for thinking about this field of inquiry.

Clifford’s ‘machine for making authenticity’ identifies two axes that are key to understanding the value of cultural objects: the horizontal axis that situates the masterpiece on the left and the artefact on the right, and the vertical axis, which situates authenticity at the top and inauthenticity at the bottom (1988, 224). The conventional opposition between the authentic and the non-authentic or spurious found in Clifford’s descriptive
diagram aligns the latter with mass production and commercial culture and interprets it as a generalized cultural location lacking in value. This effectively situates popular culture outside the realms of museum culture and subjects it to the powerful gravitational pull of inauthenticity.

![Diagram of the Art-Culture System](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 2.1** Art-Culture System: A Machine for Making Authenticity. (Clifford 1988)

Clifford’s diagrammatic description of the art-culture system certainly proved useful for illuminating the way in which traditional museums differentiated between anthropological and aesthetic value. Nevertheless, however effective it might have been in addressing the ‘predicament’ of the authority of Eurocentric ethnographic scholarship, the ‘art-culture system’ proved limited in terms of its aim of ‘open[ing] space for cultural futures, for the recognition of emergence’ in reference to popular culture (Moore 1997, 15). Leaving mass-produced objects (along with reproductions and things newly manufactured) in the lower realm, where the ‘inauthentic’ was said to reside, reflexively identified the popular as a generalized cultural location of lack.
Although the art-culture system appears to demean popular culture, it would be a mistake to directly associate Clifford with the conservative reaction of the cultural institutions studied by the pioneering scholars of twentieth-century popular culture and the museum (Zolberg 1980; Schroeder 1981; Mayo 1981). For Clifford is quite clear in qualifying ‘the historicity of this art-culture system’ and recognising that ‘the positions and values assigned to collectible artefacts have changed and will continue to do so’ over time because culture is always a contested domain (Clifford 1988, 226). And it is as a result of the invitation inherent in this qualification that Susan Pearce and Kevin Moore are able to use it to re-imagine the frameworks of museum collecting in ways that are able to recognise the value of the mass-produced materials of popular culture.

Both Pearce and Moore take Clifford’s chart as a point of departure but modify it in order to make visible the trajectory of popular and mass-produced culture as it makes its way into the museum—first by putting a pair of Levis and then a black garbage bag into the ‘machine’. Pearce’s diagram (Fig. 2.2) describes the situation in general terms, integrating emotional effects with formal characteristics in order to highlight the social
component to the process of evaluation. In writing about how collecting establishes social value, she identifies rubbish (the spurious) as material to which no socially coherent value is attached’ (Pearce 1995, 386). She also notes that objects can change location over time, allowing mass-produced objects to acquire cultural value moving into the field of cultural value or from one quadrant to another. However, although exemplification expands the artefact side of the chart and design excellence the masterpiece side, the spurious remains an anchor at the bottom of the value plot.

Figure 2.3 Plotting of possible movements in value of a black plastic rubbish bag. (Moore 1997, 74)

Moore’s diagram indicates that the elevation of mass-produced objects from ‘rubbish’ (the non-authentic or spurious) to ‘authentic’ (suitable for residence in the museum) occurs when the object exemplifies a process of production or stands for an entire set of social relations that surround it; when it represents design excellence; or when it becomes
a product of individual creativity through customization. The essence of the institutional response to popular culture involves employing several criteria for particularizing mass-produced objects in ways that distinguish them from others of their kind and render them alternately (or simultaneously) rare or representative. Things not within one of these states of being are faced with the potential to be judged spurious or non-authentic. Consequently, while Moore’s diagram (Fig. 2.3) maintains a drain for rubbish at the bottom of the diagram, his emphasis on the centrality of interpretation in the processes of establishing museum value indicates that it is more a function of the institution than a quality inherent in any particular or specific type of object.

What Moore’s diagram does is de-couple the mass-produced from the spurious or non-authentic and demonstrate the relational quality of museum value. This releases it from any generalized location and sets up the possibility of the institution adjusting its framework to accommodate new propositions regarding what has ‘socially coherent value’. As part of a body of work that establishes the critical framework within which popular culture is framed by larger questions of museum value, Moore’s contribution represents a turning point in the process of theorizing the relation of the museum to popular culture.

These appropriations by Pearce and Moore not only help us appreciate the difficulty of integrating popular cultural materials into established conceptual frameworks for museum collecting, they help us imagine the relation of the inside and outside of the museum differently. No longer a generalized cultural location of lack that exists separate from the realm of heritage, popular culture links the museum to the recent history of living cultures. And in so doing it connects the museum to the audiences and communities in which popular culture has become meaningful through its symbolic and instrumental use for pleasure, to fashion individual and group identity, to express political opinions, to invent alternative lifestyles, and to secure social status.
Several converging cultural currents associated with postmodernism have eroded the defining power of the distinction of high and low culture. Two shifts in theory have been of particular importance in guiding the ideas outlined by Clifford and modified by Pearce and Moore toward a fuller conceptualization of the sort of museum value that emerges from within the realm of the popular. The first is found within sociological theories of the commodity which emphasizes the importance of movement and complex (non-dualistic) determinations of value: Appaduria’s *The Social Life of Things* (1986) discussed the ways in which objects move in and out of the ‘commodity phase’; Thompson’s *Rubbish Theory* (1979) explored the object’s movements and transformations of consumer objects in terms of finding, displaying, and re-use; and Baudrillard’s *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981) identified four often overlapping dimensions of value (functional, exchange, symbolic, and sign value). Such (post-Marxist) theories of the value of objects existing within the commodity system, by placing emphasis on multiplicity and change, eroded confidence in the reliability of conventional binary terms and established hierarchies of value. This relational sense of value dovetailed with the challenges to the institutional authority of museums with ‘monocular narratives’ (Kidd 2014, 2) brought about by efforts to establish a more responsive and accountable public institution capable of new engagements with a wider range of communities (Sandell 2006; Janes 2009; Phillips 2011).

Also significant has been the emergence of cultural studies and popular music studies as credible fields of academic inquiry and interdisciplinary research. As acceptance of the museum’s automatic alignment with the values of dominant social groups diminished, so too did the assumption that the popular existed entirely outside the remit of the museum as a generalized cultural location of class-determined lack. While these developments provide important conceptual tools, they do not operate alone but work in tandem with the experiments and innovations introduced within the museum sector. Examples of this are exhibitions such as *Rock Circus* at Madame Tussaud’s in 1989, *Streetstyle* at the
V&A in 1994, *The Beat Goes On* at National Museums Liverpool in 1999, *Remix* at Tate Modern in 2002, and *Kylie* at V&A in 2007, as well as the founding of purpose-built popular music museums. Further, with the internet facilitating unprecedented access to all kinds of culture and museums energetically seeking to justify their existence as public institutions by continually broadening their reach and remit, it is increasingly difficult to see the difference between high and low culture. In fact, one might even start to envision the museum as itself a form of popular culture.

**Influence of ordinary collecting**

There are several strands of research related to the cultures of collecting which have developed in tandem with the discussions of the integration of popular culture with the museum’s infrastructure (Mayo 1981; Schroeder 1981; Marchese 1984; Bott 1985) and the impact of mass-produced material on the framework of museum value (Clifford 1988; Pearce 1995; Moore 1997). This body of work, which focuses primarily on the collecting practices of individuals who operate independently and largely without regard for public memory institutions, provides us with the means to consider the wider social context within which the museum encounters mass-produced material culture. Specifically, we are able to see how the world of ‘ordinary collecting’ (Macdonald 2006) becomes integral to the museum through its engagement with popular culture.

One of the cornerstone studies in the multi-disciplinary field of ordinary collecting is Werner Muensterberger’s *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (1994). As a psychoanalyst, Muensterberger is interested in explaining collecting in terms of the emotional and psychological needs of the individual. He traces the human tendency to establish ‘emotional affinity with inanimate objects’ (Muensterberger 1995, 26) to a primordial psychic uncertainty and a sense of powerlessness and describes collecting as a ‘hedge against nothingness’ (*Ibid.*, 61). Collecting, he claims, offers compensation for ‘the love and tenderness [the collector] may have lacked during their early years’ (*Ibid.*, 18), mitigates the sense of existential dread, shields against loss, and enhances self-image.
Russell Belk similarly recognises the ‘quest for self completion’ embedded in collecting practices, but his deeper interest is in the parallels between the historical development of collecting and consumerism (1995, 4) and in what the patterns in collecting practices reflect about life within consumer society (Ibid., 157). For Belk, one of the significant aspects of individual collecting is the way in which it binds personal memory and sense of self to collective memory. In a culture with very few collective rituals, collecting practices offer one of the rare opportunities for the individual to experience ‘aggregate levels of the self’ (Ibid., 121). At the same time, collecting can serve social functions such as resisting consumerist materialism by salvaging cultural materials on the brink of extinction.

Psychological and social factors also play a significant role in the explanations and interpretations of the phenomenon examined by other literature on collecting. The mediated expression of individual identity (through masquerade) is seen as offering compensation for a sense of social fragmentation (Martin 1999, 23); collecting is interpreted as providing ‘emotionally potent’ experiences of personal validation (Pearce 1994, 26); or even as a form of ‘world making’ (Baudrillard 1994). For the visitor-centric museum the relation between the systematic collecting of the institution and the independent activities ‘outside it’ become increasingly important. Private collectors who partner with the museum help strengthen ‘the bond between a museum and its community’, securing both psychological and ethical benefits (Knell 2004, 259).

The literature on collecting has also benefitted from a number of empirical studies such as the Leicester Contemporary Collecting Project, which provides detailed consideration of the social relations, psychological impulses, and self-conception of individuals and communities engaged in popular collecting (Digger 1994; Pearce 1998; P. Martin 1999; Pearce, Bounia, and Martin 2002). Surveys of consumer behaviour (Travis 1988; Belk 1995) as well as national research projects such as Mass Observation in the UK and Samdok in Sweden that focus on everyday life (Sheridan 2000; Rhys 2011; Steen 2004) also highlight the significance of collecting as a aspect of everyday life. Taken together,
these various investigations have conclusively established the connection between the everyday and the institution whose collection becomes ‘an image of what the whole is believed to be’ (Pearce 1992, 38).

What stands out as significant in the ecosystem of collecting is a two-step process in which ‘amateurs’ prepare the ground for the institution’s collecting efforts. Rather than inventing the conceptual framework or techniques for collecting, the museum appears to inherit them from the culture at large. While this might not be true for every subject area, the bond between museum and community seems likely to be especially strong with regard to popular culture collecting. And it is just these types of configurations that we shall see in Chapter 4 when we discuss in detail how popular music matches its categories of evaluation to those used in the surrounding music cultures.

2.4 Vernacular culture’s challenge to the museum

*Blurring boundaries between public and private*

Ordinary collecting introduces the notion that popular culture challenges the museum’s sense of stable boundaries, especially when the ‘external’ collecting practices become recognized as a site of heritage activity that might even supersede the capacities of the museum. Many collectors of popular culture operate outside the museum, independent and unconnected. Their influence is felt in a number of ways, in terms of the categories they use, according to the markets they evolve, and what is established a culturally significant. Ordinary collecting, especially of popular culture, can thus be seen as raising boundary issues and questions of purpose. For if it is the collectors that have been successful in the salvaging and preservation of the material heritage of popular music, what is the purpose of the museum? What defines its remit and what delineates its difference?

Answering such questions involves understanding the cultural spaces surrounding the museum. Although this could be said of any museum, it is a central and defining question for the popular music museum not only because of the relationship of its audience to
popular music culture, but also because this relationship is increasingly archival and historically informed. Consequently, the boundary between inside and outside the museum is blurred.

The relationship of the audience to music is largely formed through the integration of popular music within daily life. There are several possible ways in which to characterize this relationship. It is possible to place emphasis on the availability of music and describe it in terms of its ‘ubiquitousness’ (Kassabian, Boschi, and Quinones 2013). However, this term evokes the ambient quality of music in a manner suggesting something enveloping and immaterial, which leaves many aspects of the project of the popular music museum ignored, particularly its concern with materiality. Describing it as ‘everyday’ has the advantage of seeing it in terms of the timeframes of human action, and of highlighting its appropriation to the audience or consumer’s familiar reality. However, the term ‘everyday’ is disadvantaged by its association with the commonplace and the routine, as well as its tendency to draw us toward considerations of cognition (North 2004; Herbert 2011) or wellbeing (DeNora 2013). The term ‘vernacular’, in contrast, refers to specific people (cultural groups) and specific locations. As a result, it conveniently fuses the two disruptive aspects of popular culture that challenge the museum: its fore-fronting of audience agency, and its variable but often quite specific links with location.

In the field of popular music studies, the research on ordinary collecting tends to dovetail with discussions about the psychological and social aspects of fandom, which are evident in, for instance, the collector’s ‘secondary involvement’ in activities that go ‘beyond simple listening to the music’ (Shuker 2010, 8). Much of the research on collecting focuses on the social, psychological, and emotional elements at play in record collecting. Will Straw’s formative work on record collecting points out the ‘rituals of homo-social interaction’ that take shape around the record (Straw 1997a, 5) and within the record store (Straw 1997b). It also introduces the idea that collecting involves moving culture
from the ‘public commercial realm into the domestic environment’ (Straw 1997a, 5). Both the consideration of gender and its relation to cultural capital and the exercise of agency in appropriating or resisting values of the public sphere resound in other research. The dynamic of these two aspects is best described by David Beer, who writes of it as a ‘dance of ‘inscriptive’ and ‘incorporative’ processes within the context of music collection (2008, 84).

Roy Shuker’s book-length investigation of various forms of record collecting (from the early era of the 78 to the MP3) examines how personal taste, which is shaped by ‘nostalgia and personal memory’ (2010, 107), often merges with the canonical approach to collecting, effectively creating a conversation between the individual and collective values. The ‘dance of inscriptive and incorporative processes’ is also evident in an analysis of the five-day-long national music broadcast ‘The Dutch Top 2000’ which media theorist José van Dijck describes as ‘an intricate and recursive connection between personal and collective cultural memory’ (2006, 358).

The cultural location of the agent of the collecting process sometimes puts more stress on one of the other processes. For instance, young people with ‘retrogressive tastes’ (preferring Nirvana to Justin Bieber and purchasing vinyl) are seen as seeking to ‘regain a degree of agency’ by avoiding prevailing modes of music consumption or cultural preferences (Hayes 2006, 57). Similarly, collectors of digital music files are viewed as exercising agency by developing routines for tending (sorting, classifying, organizing) their collections in ways that ‘attach materiality to their music even when it lacks a physical presence’ (Kibby 2009, 441).

The vernacular aspects of ordinary collecting (in general but more specifically in reference to popular music culture) challenge the museum by relativizing one of its defining provisions. When collecting activities spread across the boundaries between public and private, it appears to call into question the museum’s ‘monopoly on public memory’
(Caron and Brown 2011). The vernacular represents a further challenge to the museum because it is a cultural landscape infused with local and personal interests, potentially at odds with the public nature of the museum and the ideals of cultural heritage—that it be non-sectarian and represent a version of cultural consensus.

**Sharing the cultural narrative**

The vernacular aspect of popular culture is one where the agency of the audience is fully visible as a defining force. Culture studies has a long history of analysing the ‘negotiated meaning’ associated with media and consumer culture and provides some useful methodologies—including those fashioned by Hall (1973), Tagg (1979), and Gledhill (1988). Sociology also offers a number of durable analytic frameworks—such as those of Bourdieu (1984), Giddens (1984), and de Certeau (1984)—with which to explore the dynamics of agency and social structure. However, it is in popular music studies that we find the most detailed and sustained consideration of the vernacular aspects of popular culture which have, until very recently, usually been discussed in reference to the notion of ‘subculture’.

Popular music studies’ theory of subculture was the first intellectual concept unique to the discipline. It was developed by researchers at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, which was then under the direction of Stuart Hall (from 1968 to 1979). The concept of ‘subculture’ provided the intellectual scaffolding for examining the social relations that were organised in relation to specific styles of popular music. Influenced by Hall’s encoding-decoding model of communication and his use of Antonio Gramsci’s ideas about hegemony, relative autonomy, and articulation, researchers at Birmingham focused their attentions on describing the negotiation of meaning within the cultural sphere. Research residents such as Dick Hebdige, Tony Jefferson, Angela McRobbie, and Paul Willis conducted studies of youth groups such as mods, hippies, skinheads, and teenage girls in order to illuminate how popular music informed the psychological and social processes through which such groups were formed.
For British academics subcultural rituals and affinities could be seen as ‘problem solving’ responses to the instabilities within the class system and were often used to create new ‘opportunity structures’ (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 29) With much of the negotiating and problem-solving going on within subcultural groups occurring at the local and domestic levels, the concept is directly linked to the notion of the vernacular. For museum studies, this provides a valuable point of reference for thinking about the segmentation of audiences and the ways in which audiences make personal cultural investments in popular culture.

While the concept has enjoyed significant influence in both academic and popular cultural realms (as a consequence of Hebdige’s Subculture: the Meaning of Style in 1979), as the discipline expanded, its centrality in academic discussions of popular music has waned. Toward the end of the 1980s, other terminology relating to fan culture, mainstream tastes, and the mechanisms used to maintain the distinctions between practices which grounded the creation and acquisition of symbolic or cultural capital began to emerge as central to the study of popular music. A large-scale research survey of ‘rock taste’ amongst Swedish youth (Tondman 2004), an anthology about fan culture (Lewis 1992), and an extensive ethnographic study of the British rave scene that merged the thinking of Hebdige with that of Bourdieu to create a theory of ‘sub-cultural capital’ (Thornton 1995) successfully established other conceptual frameworks for analysing music cultures. Several applications of the concept of subculture within other cultural contexts (Adler 1982; Maira 1999) direct critiques of its failure to adequately address gender or race (McRobbie 1991; Huq 2006) and discussions of the diminished relevance of the category ‘youth’ (Redhead 1997; Kotarba 2013) for thinking about music culture rendered the notion of subculture an increasingly historical one.

Changing socio-economic circumstances relating to global capital, mass migrations, and the influence of media on the dynamics of identification and location (Bhabha 1994; A. Bennett and Peterson 2004) have suggested other ways of conceiving of cultural
identity. The terminology developed to describe musically mediated forms of collectivity has included ‘scenes’ (Straw 1991; Cohen 1991), neo-tribes (Bennett 2004), and milieu cultures (Webb 2007), ideas which might, arguably, be seen as having prepared the ground for recent—’long tail’ and ‘here comes everybody’—thinking about ‘niches’ and the power of networks which inform both popular and academic discussions of current modes of communication and the cultures they inform (Anderson 2006; Shirky 2008).

However, even as the presence of media networks becomes more evident in research on popular music cultures (Jones 2010; van Dijck 2009; Withers 2014; Collins and Long 2014), the importance of the vernacular aspects of consumption, sociability, and identity formation persist. It is within the vernacular landscape that the cultural narratives of popular culture take shape.

The identification of popular culture with its vernacular aspects has significant implications. If popular culture is meant to be a shared culture in which public memory is created, circulated, and, increasingly, stored, then to align it with the vernacular is to suggest that public memory takes shape in the private (or quasi-private) sphere. Consequently, even though the vernacular aspect of the engagement with popular culture changes over time (in accordance with public dialogues, shifting social values, and changes brought by media technologies), it remains intimately tied to the agency of the audience. Within subcultures, scenes, milieux, or users of networked platforms, that agency can define the narrative and justifiably make claims to ownership. The museum is used to promoting its narrative to the audience, but this is challenged by the centrality of the vernacular within popular culture. Consequently, rather than sharing its narrative, the museum must suspend its claim to centrality in order to share in the narrative of popular culture. What we will see later in Chapter 4 is how this creates a contentious relationship between the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s master narrative and the tastes of some of its fans. In Chapter 5 we will see the Experience Music Project successfully sharing the exhibition narrative of *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* with the audience. And in Chapter 6
we will discover the possibility of imagining an even deeper collaboration between the agents of independent heritage initiatives and the British Music Experience.

2.5 Multimodal culture’s challenge to the museum

Popular culture is not itself a single subject or genre. Rather, the term describes a set of cultural practices that use various media formats to deliver content to people who appropriate it from within their everyday lives. While the content of each genre of popular culture is shaped in a distinct fashion by the media that delivers it, most genres of popular culture (television, comics, games, popular music) have a common characteristic: they are multimodal. That is, they aggregate resources for making meaning in ways that give rise to specific forms or wholes that possess particular rhetorical patterns and semiotic potential. Because it is possible to view the museum as having long been a context for multi-sensory, multi-dimensional communication (McLean 1999; Parry and Sawyer 2005; Witcomb 2003; Henning 2006) it may not be immediately apparent how the multimodal character of popular culture presents challenges to the museum. By reviewing the literature on the ‘post-museum’, however, it is clear its embrace of informal learning, the use of media technology, and experiential modes of communication stand in contrast to not only some of the museum’s conventional values but also to the museum’s presuppositions and established routines.

Shifting focus from object to experience

In a 2006 article entitled Spectacle and Democracy: Experience Music Project as Post-Museum, the former director of that museum’s Curatorial and Collections division, Chris Bruce, argues that the multimodal nature of popular culture should be viewed as determining for the museum of the twenty-first century. He reports on how the founding conversations about the Experience Music Project ‘questioned the old sanctity of the artefact’ and considered the possibility that artefacts might be potentially expendable ‘in favour of more compelling narratives and delivery systems’ (2006, 133). Ultimately opting for a hybrid model, a ‘dialogue between technology and artefact’ (Ibid., 142),
upholding and ‘even extending the aura of rare artefacts’, the team involved in forging the museum’s mission affirmed the importance but not the centrality of the object in the schema of the post-museum.

Bruce draws upon Hooper-Greenhill’s concept of the ‘post-museum’ which is described in terms of a ‘renegotiation of the relationship of the museum to its audiences’ and the ‘politics of address’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 142)

‘In the post-museum, multiple subjectivities and identities can exist as part of a cultural practice that provide the potential to expand the politics of democratic community and solidarity.’ (Ibid., 140)

Hooper-Greenhill’s theory of the ‘post-museum’ is part of the discussion that developed in the wake of the ‘new museology’ which turned attention from museum methods (conservation, collections management, etc.) to questions about the museum’s purpose (Vergo 1989) and sought to revise the definition of what a museum is and does so that it might facilitate a more democratic engagement. Although initial discussions of the ‘new museology’ did not explicitly deal with popular culture as a means for realising a democratising agenda, there was increasing recognition of the continuity between museums and popular cultural spaces in historical terms (Sorensen 1989; Greenhalgh 1989; Bennett 1995). Similarly, Hooper-Greenhill’s mention of how the modernist museum ‘was held apart from popular culture’ anticipates the reconfiguration of this distribution within the era of ‘post museum’ that, not coincidentally, would also be identified as the era of the network (Castells 2010).

Bruce points to the use of technology to create spectacle and to put the ‘power and control’ of spectacle in the hands of the user: ‘the driving objective is to have visitors feel like they have been ‘inside’ the content’ (2006, 141). Hooper-Greenhill had earlier made a similar recognition of the impact of the media technology in terms of shifting the museum’s modality from that of a space of things to a place of dialogic events.
In the post-museum, the exhibition will become one among many other forms of communication. The exhibition will form part of a nucleus of events which will take place both before and after the display is mounted. These events might involve the establishment of community and organizational partnerships...[and] during these events, discussions, workshops, performances, dances, songs, and meals will be produced or enacted.’ (Hooper-Greenhill 1995, 152)

She recognizes that the modernist museum was ‘a place for learning that was held apart from the popular culture of the everyday.’ (Ibid., 127) The post-museum, in contrast, emerges as a ‘site of experiential and informal learning’ where aspects of entertainment and play would mix with more contemplative engagements with museum content.

Bruce makes the point even more emphatically:

Just as a traditional museum assumes that exposure to culture edifies the visitor and creates a better, more well-rounded citizen, EMP assumes that active involvement empowers the visitor to have the confidence to perhaps uncover untapped wells of creativity and self-expression. (Bruce 2006, 135)

Thus, the post-museum can be said to answer the question of how to make public institutions more pluralistic, more democratically inclusive, and more accessible, with the offer of a more self-consciously multimodal museum experience which shifts from a framework in which museum content is something to consider to one in which museum content is something to encounter.

**Changing formats, technical standards, technologies**

By shifting emphasis from the object to experience, popular culture requires the museum to integrate multi-modality display techniques. Although media technology plays a prominent role in shaping the experiential museum (Witcomb 2003; Henning 2006; Parry 2010), it is not the only reference point. The experiential also evokes other participatory
modalities such as the interpersonal (Simon 2010). Moreover, media technology is not always user-facing or conceived of as experiential, but instead involves the organisation’s infrastructure, extending the challenges of its integration beyond the user interface. Thus, in addition to the conceptual adjustments required to facilitate the ‘inclusion of non-objects’ (Witcomb 2003, 103), enhance visitor experience through ‘active participation’ (Simon 2010, 197), and enable shared ownership of the cultural narrative (Caron and Brown 2011), the integration of digital technologies (including the multimodal forms used in display) require the museum to deal with the diverse and changing formats, technical standards, and technologies that popular cultures entail.

What the literature highlights is that the integration of media and computer technology has been a more difficult, discontinuous, and long-running project than is often acknowledged. For instance, there were several groundbreaking audio guide initiatives which came and went during the 1950s and 1960s: Stedelijk Museum’s Short-Wave Ambulatory Lectures; the Sound-trek audio guides of the American Museum of Natural History, and the sharable audio guides at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (Tallon and Walker 2008). Similarly, remote access to collections through a ‘data bank’ of museum information, a central question for museums in the mid-1990s (at which time the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) played a leading role in both creation and discussion), have a much longer history that stretches as far back as 1969 when the University of Oklahoma established its General Information Processing System (Parry 2007, 93). Exhibition experiments with interactive and responsive technology can be traced back to the same era, when the collaborative performance group Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) organised programmes at the Brooklyn Museum in 1969 and for the Pepsi pavilion at Expo ’70 in Osaka, Japan set the stage for the development of immersive and interactive environments (Bonin 2003).

More recent events also point to the fragility of visionary efforts involving the museum’s integration of new media. The Experience Music Project’s landmark information
infrastructure project (the Museum Exhibit Guide), which integrated its audio exhibit
guide with its collections database but lasted only five years (Maguire et al. 2005;
Andolsek and Freedman 2001) is one such example. Another is the founding, and then
dismantling, of the short-lived but influential New Media department of the Walker Arts
Centre (Bautista 2014). Two popular music museums in the UK—the National Centre
for Popular Music in Sheffield and the British Music Experience in London—provide
larger-scale examples of the museum bested by the challenges of integrating media,
even when there is little sense of a ‘fundamental incompatibility’ (Parry 2007, 2).

Thus, the challenges of popular culture’s multimodality relate to both museum commu-
nication and the integration of technology, and can raise questions about resources,
relevance, sustainability, and even larger-scale issues such as the value of the museum’s
attraction status within the context of urban regeneration (Brabazon and Mallinder 2006).
Consequently, to acknowledge and engage more profoundly with the everyday worlds
of popular culture requires the museum to integrate a range of media technologies that
can sometimes prove destabilising. Such instability can take hold at a number of levels,
but when looking at this issue from the perspective of visitor experience, the exhibition
is the framework within which specific design techniques and their communicative
effects can be seen.

Rendering space labyrinthine

Multimodal exhibition space breaks from the tradition of ‘serial display’, the means by
which museums historically established ‘the ritual of attentive looking’ (Alpers 1991, 26)
Although narrative held central place in the interpretation of exhibitions (Bal 1996;
Psarra 2009), scholars have also made reference to theatre as ‘stagecraft’ (Preziosi and
Farago 2004; Roppola 2013) or ritual space (Duncan 1991) as alternate frameworks.
There have also been discussions of the exhibition as a site of ‘resonance and wonder’
(Greenblatt 1991) and ‘epiphany’ (Skolnick 2012) in which the atmospheric and affective
aspects of physical environments are brought to the fore. With the introduction of media
and the interest in implementing theories of active engagement, a host of new characterisations of the museum of the twenty-first century have emerged: participatory (Simon 2010), relational (Grewcock 2013), exploded, and multi-platform (Proctor 2010). While each of the recent characterisations has its nuances, one of the assumptions they seem to share is that the museum is involved in not only reconfigured internal spaces but also ‘networks that extend beyond its physical boundaries’ (Phillips 2011, 316).

The rapidly maturing field of interdisciplinary museum design research, which involves design practitioners, museum professionals, and scholars, contributes to the ‘ongoing transformation of museums into visitor-centred organisation’ by promoting a research-led approach to exhibition development alongside a detailed analysis of the relationship of physical materials and forms to the ‘production of particular types of experience’ (MacLeod, Dodd, and Duncan 2015b). One important line of thought emerging from within this field is the one that links exhibition structures (sequential, hierarchical, matrix, or parallel thematic structures) to visitor navigation, connecting ‘visual fields’ directly to ‘spatial sequences’ (Hillier and Tzortzi 2007). Using the notion of the path to highlight the subjective process and pluralistic choice characterising the visitor’s engagement with the museum content, Paul Basu makes a convincing case for using the labyrinth, which denies any transcending vantage point from which to apprehend the exhibition topography, as a figure for both the museum space and the knowledge creation that takes place within it. When looked at from this perspective, rather than supplying the narrative, the museum acts as:

a space of narrative potential: a space that is potentially generative of a diversity of paths and stories, but which is reliant upon the enunciative spatial practices of each visitor to bring them into being…[ensuring] that the whole story always remains beyond (Basu 2007, 67–68).

Thus, what he calls the ‘labyrinthine aesthetic’ offers one helpful way of describing the multimodal exhibition both as space and as interpretive process (Basu 2007). Another
use of the term multimodal is found in discussions of digital heritage, where it is used to describe the inclusion of several different kinds of converging, user-navigated content (Mason 2012; White, Bilenko, and Cucerzan 2007). The term multimodal refers to the media employed in the exhibition and also includes design elements used to stage the presentation (its mise-en-scène). However, it is equally important to the development of the thesis that the term’s value for understanding the multi-tiered communicative function of the exhibition is also recognized.

In the social semiotic discourse analysis of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006), the term multimodal is used to refer to the various semiotic resources integrated in the composite communicative phenomenon. The focus in their work is on the layers of meaning and the socially situated aspects of interpretation which distinguish it from work done in museum design research, where the design processes and the use of materials has greater prominence. However, the difference between the two approaches is largely one of emphasis and thus does not present any major obstacles to their being used in tandem to explain the exhibition practices of the popular music museum.

There are also several contributions within the field of multimodal discourse analysis that take museum exhibitions as their subject, treating them as ‘motivated conjunctions of form and meaning’ (Kress 2010, 65). When directly applied to the exhibition context (Ravelli and McMurtrie 2015; Meng 2004; Diamantopolou, Insulander, and Lindstrand 2012; Lindstrand and Insulander 2012), they provide useful conceptual tools for analysing the layers or levels of communication being enacted within the exhibition—for sorting the surplus of meaning that results from behavioural and interpretive responses and the semantic shifts that arise as the result of the particularisation that occurs in the visitor’s encounter with content.

The aim in Chapter 6 is to integrate the two uses of the term ‘multimodal’ in order to support an analysis of the popular music museum’s mode of display, to illuminate the
relation between spatial communication and the layers of discourse within the exhibition, and to analyse how multimodal exhibition strategies are used to secure audience engagement. In so doing, we expect to develop a methodology that can admit the transcultural and transmedial experiences of the audiences of popular culture (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013) in which individuals operate as producers as much as consumers.

This chapter has highlighted three key themes found within that itinerant discussion of popular culture and the museum. It uses them to establish a framework for investigating how such challenges reshape museum provision. The mass-produced, the vernacular, and the multimodal are critical concerns for the popular music museum, but they are also themes that have relevance for other subjects—subjects as varied as fashion, working-class history, and science. They have been retrieved from the literature in order to equip the thesis with three key concepts that can speak to both the specific character of popular music and to more general concerns pertaining to the twenty-first-century museum.

The particular approach used here involves addressing one of the general challenges associated with popular culture—mass-production, the vernacular, or the multimodal—and one of the specific challenges of popular music in each of the case study chapters. This allows us to build an interdisciplinary thesis that speaks to the specific character of popular music from within the context of museum studies. It is hoped that this will not only remedy the gap in scholarship, but also offer readers a bridge between the two disciplines. But before we do this, we need to identify and examine the specific challenges popular music represents to the museum in greater detail and from within the context provided by its academic discipline.
3.1 Introduction

The field of popular music studies provides another important backdrop to this investigation. It is from within its research and writings that we are able to retrieve three additional themes that help illuminate the topic of the popular music museum: personal memory, the non-monumental, and contested ownership. The first theme concerns the deep and direct connection of popular music to personal memory and meaning. The second involves the discussion of the influence of geography and networks on the constitution of the non-monumental sites of popular music creation and reception. The third area of investigation focuses on the contests regarding ownership and authenticity that are endemic to popular music culture. Each theme is important because it connects the popular music museum to the culture it represents, and because it resonates within the broader context of museum studies.

Popular music studies and museum studies are both interdisciplinary fields of study that frequently find grounding in the same theoretical frameworks borrowed from sociology (Appaduria, Bourdieu, Foucault), critical theory (Adorno, Benjamin), semiotics (Barthes, Kress), and anthropology (Clifford, Turner). Although a number of these underlying theories are brought to the surface in the analysis of the popular music museum, this thesis is not meant to offer an exhaustive exegesis of the conceptual underpinnings of either discipline. Rather, the goal is to identify central issues that are of direct relevance to the popular music museum’s reshaping of the core provision of the museum: collection, exhibition, and visitation.

The observations of this literature review—in combination with the themes developed in the previous chapter—allow us to develop a framework for examining the findings from the case studies. By examining popular culture as a multimodal phenomenon, jointly rooted in mass production and the vernacular, and popular music as a contested cultural practice that operates across a network of sites to create a non-monumental
heritage of highly personal attachments, we prepare to examine more deeply and in detail the challenge the subject of popular music represents to the conventional provision of the museum.

Much of the recent research on popular music cultural heritage had been supported by one of four major research projects undertaken at the beginning of the decade: *Connected Communities, Music Communities* (University of Manchester); *Popular Music Heritage, Cultural Memory and Cultural Identity POPID* (EU wide research project); the Australian project *Popular Music and Cultural Memory: Localised popular music histories and their significance for national music industries*; and *MusDig: Music, Digitisation, Mediation: Towards Interdisciplinary Music Studies*, a UK project (Oxford). Notable amongst the outputs are four edited books, each associated with one of the research projects: *Social Networks and Music Worlds* (Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015), *Preserving Popular Music Heritage* (Baker 2015), *Sites of Popular Music Heritage* (Cohen, Knifton, Leonard and Roberts 2015) and *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience* (Born 2013).

However, despite the recent proliferation of books and articles on the topic of popular music cultural heritage, research on popular music museums remains quite scarce. This lack is significant because the long-range prospects for preserving popular music cultural heritage improve greatly when they involve some form of systematic collecting (Macdonald 2011). For while ordinary and individual collecting are essential for establishing the authenticity of the representation of the cultures of popular music, the ability of such approaches for establishing a sense of public ownership and historical continuity are often limited. The museum, in contrast, as a type of cultural institution defined by the systematic and historical dimensions of its custodial activities, provides a reliable framework for securing popular music’s visibility as cultural heritage.

The themes being employed in this investigation are anchored in earlier portions of the literature and thus we recommend their review in order to establish a sound framework.
Of particular importance are the discussions of the influence of music on social identity, the dynamics of identification and location, and the mediation of subjectivity and memory. What follows, then, is a short summary of how the agency of the audience emerged and became established as a central conceptual reference point for theorizing popular music culture.

3.2 Agency of the audience

The role of music in creating and connecting personal and social identities is a central concern of popular music studies. In the initial stages of its emergence as a field of study, the various sociological investigations dealing with popular music or youth culture were frequently referenced as a means to ‘rescue popular music from being treated as trivial and unimportant’ (Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002). Popular music’s ‘commercial origins, supposed lack of complexity, and dubious aesthetic merit’ were offset through recognition of its social significance (Ibid., 6). Among the earliest empirical studies on the relationship between youth and popular culture, four are worth mentioning for their role as founding documents (Frith and Goodwin 1990, 2). Most frequently cited are the studies published by David Riesman (1950) and Howard Becker (1963), two American sociologists whose work rejected the then dominant functionalist paradigm in favour of a more critical approach to questions of social structure and deviance, and social control. Noteworthy for their insights into the cultures associated with popular music as well as for having drawn upon new approaches such as interactionism, ethnomethodology, and Marxist cultural critique, they examine the social worlds of musicians and marijuana users and the (gendered) musical tastes of urban teenagers (Riesman 1950; Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002). During the same period, groundbreaking research also emerged in the UK. Stanley Cohen’s Folk Devils and Moral Panics (1964), an examination of the media treatment of seaside holiday clashes between mod and rocker gangs in the early 1960s, was particularly influential. Less well known today is the once widely read research of Mary Morse—based on a three-year study of ‘detached’ or street-identified British youth—which was first published in
1965 as a paperback entitled *Unattached*. It remains historically significant in terms of its use of participant-observer research methodology, its commission by the National Association of Youth Clubs in the UK, and the impact that its profile of the conditions facing young people had on the development of social programmes (Morse 1968).

In addition to their rejection of functionalist interpretations that emphasised social cohesion and implicitly supported the maintenance of the social status quo, these studies, through their association with youth culture and social conflict, came to be associated with progressive democratic impulses and political positions that supported expanded enfranchisement and an increased sense of social agency (Mabey 1969; Denisoff 1975; Shuker 2002). Additionally, some politicized claims were also made in direct reference to *musical* education (Fowler 1970; Vulliamy 1977) with authors pointing to the pedagogic failure of traditional music instruction as a reason to integrate popular music into the curriculum. However, rather than the musical claims it was more often the socially grounded claims made on behalf of popular music that established its respectability within the academic world (Gans 1974; Hall and Jefferson 1976). Popular music, it was realised, could help increase engagement and extend democratic reach, and facilitate the development of interpretive frameworks useful for understanding current affairs and contemporary life (Cooper 1982).

Despite some earlier uses of the term ‘popular music’ in reference to peasant, folk, or traditional songs, for many years the term has been primarily associated with the mass media and youth culture of the post-war period. William Chappell’s *Popular Music of the Olden Time* (1859), an annotated songbook tracing the provenance of ballads and folk songs sometimes dating back to medieval times, has been cited as a possible first use of the term ‘popular music’ (Shuker 2008, 6; Middleton 1990, 4). However, by the 1920s and 1930s, the term ‘popular’ increasingly came to be understood as a quantitative measure of a product created within an industrial process, and popular music as something belonging to ‘the mass’ rather than ‘the folk’ (Frith 1978). The media technologies that gave popular
music a consumable form as a cultural product—phonograph, record and radio, microphone, amplifier, and electric instrument—began to appear as defining.

For some, popular music’s association with mass production and commercial culture was a troubling entanglement that compromised both aesthetic value and political significance. Such suspicion is most dramatically evident in the work of Theodor Adorno. Simply put, for Adorno popular music was, ultimately, the product of the capitalist ‘culture industry’ lacking aesthetic autonomy or the capacity to reveal the social forces shaping existence. He disparaged enjoyment of beat-driven music as the self-renunciation of an obedient population that allowed for the imposition of the rhythm of the assembly line and the inculcation of the instrumental logic of the machine. He decried the basic structures of popular music (verse, chorus, bridge) as something that rendered musical detail insignificant and virtually all listening ‘quotational’ (Adorno 1941). He saw its expressive immediacy as an illusion and nothing of redeeming value in its ability to act as ‘social cement’ (Middleton 1990, 36). Authentic musical expression, for Adorno, could not exist within the realm of mass media but could only be secured through gestures asserting artistic autonomy through the refusal to affirm the status quo: it was only possible from within the ‘esoteric discontinuities of modern art’ (Middleton 1990, 45) where ‘avant-garde negation’ served as critique (Born 1993).

As a result, it might seem paradoxical that popular music studies have regularly, almost ritualistically, made reference to Adorno’s criticisms of popular music (Jones 1977; Frith 1978, 195; Chambers 1982; Middleton 1990, 35; Hamm 1995; Negus 1997; Frith 1998; Lindberg et al. 2005; Shuker 2008). However, as popular music’s most articulate detractor, Adorno’s critiques have challenged the field to justify its subject, analysing its relation to economic structures and producing empirical work relating to the recording industry; explicating the value of specific musical ‘texts’ in musicological, literary, and semiotic terms; and employing a conceptual vocabulary (including terms such as subculture, hegemony, relative autonomy) in order to understand the operation of the
cultures of popular music and explain their social meaning. In retrospect it might even seem that the chief value of Adorno’s work has been its ability to inspire sustained and detailed efforts to prove his method inadequate to the challenges of understanding popular music.

Thus, popular music studies rejected both functionalist methodologies that emphasised social cohesion and implicitly supported the maintenance of the social status quo, and aspects of critical theory which led it into a conceptual cul-de-sac regarding popular music through their failure to differentiate the varied processes of popular music and ignoring its potential politicization (Born 1993, 225). By the mid-nineties, when the popular music studies publishing boom was in full swing, consensus emerged regarding popular music’s status as ‘a shifting cultural phenomenon’ that would defy exact definition, even when text and context were successfully synthesized. Middleton explained it as an effort to ‘put a finger on that space, that terrain of contradiction—between ‘imposed’ and authentic, ‘elite’ and ‘common’, predominant and subordinate, then and now, theirs and ours, and so on—and to organise it in particular ways’ (1990, 7). The study of popular music, conceived as a field of shifting factors, had developed, if not a method, at least an approach that was able to mirror the dynamism of popular music itself. The method of analysis, the terms that organised the discussion, allowed various aspects of popular music to move from fore to ground, from positions of subordination to domination, residual to emergent in a fluid fashion.

Central to the conceptualization of popular music as a ‘field study’ was the widespread influence of Pierre Bourdieu’s research on taste and social location which was first published in 1979 in French and a few years later in English as Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (1984). His elaboration of the notion of ‘cultural capital’ along with that of ‘field’ and ‘habitus’ offered popular music studies a new vocabulary for examining involvements with mass media and culture that promised to provide a more complex understanding of how class and class fractions are formed and
operate in relation to cultural consumption. While Bourdieu tended to treat class as relatively stable, defined and secured within a ‘habitus’ (‘the system of dispositions’ that facilitate social recognition and status and secure a sense of belonging), his recognition of the relational character of ‘fields’ (settings of social action in which power is at play) suggested a different way of looking at culture. By taking into account several independent variables, his methodology drew attention to the dynamic aspect of people’s engagement with culture as lived experience. In addition, Bourdieu recognized the seismic shift represented by the integration of aesthetic with ordinary consumption that had occurred in the years following the Second World War. Notwithstanding Bourdieu’s identification of this shift as ‘barbarous’ (Bourdieu 1984, 7) his groundbreaking research suggested the need for a more nuanced understanding of the internal logic of popular culture that could match the one he had provided for bourgeois taste (Straw 2010, 211). And what would prove key to the development of this understanding was the elaboration of the idea that there was agency within the processes of consumption. Bourdieu had demonstrated how the consumption of goods was simultaneously the production of taste, but it fell to others to elaborate on these ideas and locate the agency and creativity within the cultures of popular music.

In the wake of Bourdieu, there appeared a number of more detailed investigations of the operations of popular culture, and, even more specifically, the agency of its audiences. One heading under which studies of popular music found common cause with other cultural studies was as a scholarly literature advancing the notion of the ‘consumer as producer’. In order to reconfigure consumption as a productive cultural activity, researchers and theorists wove together several strands of thought about media and consumer culture, including Stuart Hall’s foundational model of encoding/decoding (1973), Christine Gledhill’s psychoanalytically informed theory of ‘pleasurable negotiations’ (1988), John Fiske’s investigations of the ‘active audience’ (2010), and Henry Jenkins’s concept of ‘textual poachers’ (1992). Within popular music studies there emerged specific discussions about audience activities as forms of symbolic resistance to authority.
(Hebdige 1979); appropriations of meaning from popular music into everyday life
(Vermorel and Vermorel 1985; Chambers 1985; Pickering 1990); ways of framing and
mediating national, racial, and gender identity (Gilroy 1993; Guilbault 1993; McRobbie
1991; Lewis 1992). As the idea of the agency of the audience gained momentum three
important areas of research began to develop. One was the research with a marked
interest in the everyday life of audiences, which sought to explain in detail how popular
music served to crystalize personal meaning, emotion, and memory. Another was the
research detailing people’s participation in music scenes, which sought to understand
the mediations of not only the music media and industry but also socio-economic factors
influencing urban life. And, alongside and often overlapping was the research focused
on fandom and how it enables performative engagements and creates community (Aber-
crombie and Longhurst 1998; Duffett 2013). A review of the literature associated with
each of these sub-sets of audience research provides a backdrop against which to set each
of the challenges to conventional museum provision created by popular music culture.

3.3 Personal memory and meaning

A number of empirical studies have examined the everyday listening habits of individuals
in order to provide insight about music’s personal meaning and use. As the ‘cultural form
closest to the lives of the majority’ (Thornton 1995, 19), music was approached from
the perspective of its integration within everyday life and empirical studies revealed its
role in mediating family relations, gender identity, and mood, as well as aspirations,
social identity, and sense of the wider world.

One of the earliest studies—often viewed as the template for ethnographic studies of
localised music ‘worlds’—is Ruth Finnegan’s The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in
an English Town (1989). It is a study of music making in the British town of Milton
Keynes and looked at the involvement of members of the community in a wide range of
musical practices including jazz, brass, and country groups. The ‘hidden’ quality of the
musical activities referenced in the title pertained not to its secretive nature but to its
‘easy to ignore’ character for the media and academics (1989, 4). Finnegan points out that the empirical evidence produces a stark contrast with theories of mass media effects and the relations of class and subculture, and illuminates the diversity of genres, practices, and conventions that have relevance for groups of amateur musicians and their audiences.

Finnegan’s contribution to the discussion of personal meaning and music highlights how personal connections result in position and favour within the amateur networks as a result of clubs being ‘run on personal, not bureaucratic lines’ (Finnegan 1989, 14–15). But it also notes something of critical importance to the growing recognition of audience agency within popular music studies. Despite the absence of any single answer to the question as to why people find it necessary to follow one or another of the ‘musical pathways’ within Milton Keynes, ‘those people perceive[d] their choices as unfettered and personal’ (Finnegan 1989, 316) and ‘experience a particular sense of active control and of personal creativity’ (Ibid., 340). However, with her focus on the participatory sociality of music, Finnegan glosses over what for many years was thought of as the archetypal listening mode of popular music: bedroom listening.

Another significant, albeit more modest, contribution to this discussion of the hidden dimensions of involvement with popular music originates with McRobbie and Garber’s contribution to Hall and Jefferson’s Resistance through Rituals (1976), ‘Girls and Subculture’, an article which picks up on assumptions about the hierarchy of public and private involvements with music. In addition to pointing out the frequently elided presence of girls within subcultures (hippie, skinhead, and mod), the authors note that certain aspects of female fandom are performed in more personal, even domestic, contexts that make them less easily named, described, or publicized. Subsequent research on women and girls in popular music embraces a wide range of perspectives including questions of image and representation (Whiteley 2000), and women’s involvement in music worlds as musicians and fans (Driscoll 1999; Schilt 2004). Other studies emphasised
the bedroom as the site of cultural creation for young women (Baker 2004), the use of popular song in the playground games of girls (Willett 2011), and other ‘reflexive negotiations’ of everyday settings (Duits 2008).

Two landmark empirical studies bring the personal use of music into especially vivid focus: My Music: Explorations of Music in Daily Life, a research project developed within a course entitled Music in Daily Life offered at the University of Buffalo in the early 1990s (Crafts, Caicchi and Keil 1993); and Tia DeNora’s Music and Everyday Life (2000). DeNora establishes the framework for her own analysis in reference to the tradition of Critical Theory and the ‘little tradition’ of the sociology of art—represented by Howard Becker’s Art Worlds (1982). Despite the fact that her research subjects are exclusively female (fifty-two women between the ages of eighteen and seventy-eight), DeNora does not make gender a primary reference point for her examination of music and society (DeNora 2000, 4). Instead, she leaves the role of gender un-thematized, until it surfaces within the reflections and recollections of her subjects.

By focusing on the ‘private music consumption’ of her subjects, DeNora is able to make evident how people use music for ‘reconfiguring agency’, both in terms of establishing themselves as ‘aesthetic agents’ and by using music as a ‘means for the regulation of feeling, mood, concentration, and energy’ (DeNora 2000). Perhaps the most significant aspects of this research have to do with how ‘in and through appropriations, cultural forms serve as devices for subjectivity’s constitution’ (DeNora 1999, 53). Observing the wide variety of interpretations of songs, genres, and musical styles amongst her research subjects leads DeNora to conclude that semiotic power does not reside in the musical form alone and to recognise music as a ‘technology of self’ (DeNora 1999, 62). Recognising the role of music in memory formation and recall might seem a banal observation, but DeNora makes note of two broadly significant features of this relation in her reflection on music’s use for ‘producing autobiographical memory’. The first is that ‘one registers self to one’s self as an object of self-knowledge, in the aesthetic construction that
is memory’ (DeNora 2000, 65); the other is that ‘memory and with it, self-identity, as being constituted on a fundamentally socio-cultural plane where the dichotomy between ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ is, for all practical purposes, null and void’ (DeNora 2000, 67).

Another important study that shifted attention from the institutional to the everyday aspects of audience engagements with popular music is Crafts, Cavacchi, and Keil’s *My Music* (1993). Selected from the one-hundred and fifty interviews collected as part of the Music in Daily Life Project, the forty-one included in the publication are organised into six age-defined sections—children, teenagers, young adults, adults, older adults, and elders—and chosen to represent a measure of cultural diversity. The use of music to modulate mood, occasion reminiscences and memorialize, understand a broader social world, or forge connections with others is apparent throughout. The interviews also reveal that ‘different locations take on special meaning for the creation and reception of music’ (Crafts, Cavacchi, and Keil 1993, xiv), and that a certain level of self-awareness exists regarding how listening to music becomes a way of taking possession of one’s environment or becoming what is heard (*Ibid.*, 155). DeNora’s suggestion that music is a ‘technology of self’ has resonance within the interviews of *My Music* which were initiated with the question ‘What is music about for you?’ While such projects certainly make visible the agency of the audience for popular music, their deep dive into the particulars of music’s significance within the everyday life of individuals—who use it to help get the housework done, set the mood for seduction, inform parents that their control has limits, or remember the dead—also highlight a certain idiosyncratic or opaque quality of the psychological aspects of people’s involvement with music. As ethnomusicologist Georgina Born notes, an exclusive focus on the micro-levels of musical experience is ultimately ‘insufficient when accounting for music’s complex social mediation’ (Born 2011, 378).

Further efforts to illuminate the nature of the individual’s everyday involvement with music are found in discussions of the personal, autobiographical nature of memories
(Baumgartner 1992; Wang and Brockmeier 2002; van Dijck 2004) and in the theory of music’s ‘semantic snowballing, which involves collecting new meanings while retaining earlier associations’ (Turino 2008, 146). But in each instance, the importance of the connection between the individual and collective aspects of memory is made evident.

Similarly, key reflections on collective memory (Lipsitz 1990; Keightley and Pickering 2006; van der Hoeven 2014; Brandellero et al. 2013) also tend to return to the importance of understanding the connection of the various levels of musical experience.

Memories attached to songs are hardly individual responses per se; recorded music gets perceived and evaluated through collective frameworks for listening and appreciation. Individual memories almost invariably arise in the context of social practices, such as music exchange and communal listening, and of cultural forms like popular radio programs, lists of hits, live concerts, and so on. These social practices and cultural forms appear almost inseparable from the memory of actual songs; as a sign of their time, popular songs create a context for reminiscence.

(van Dijck 2006, 367)

Several proposals have been made for articulating the complex connections that constitute popular music as a form that is both highly personal and significantly public. Lipsitz proposes ‘dialogic criticism’ as a useful method which ‘connects affect to agency, and grounds social and ideological choices within the life worlds and collective memories of actual historical subjects’ (Lipsitz 1990, 106). Born outlines a ‘social analytics that encompasses four planes of social mediation’ which begins with the ‘intimate socialities’ of practice, moves to a second level at which listeners are aggregated ‘into virtual collectivities and publics based on musical and other identifications’, a third where ‘wider social identity formations’ such as age, class, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality mediate musical involvements, and concludes with the ‘social and institutional forms that provide the ground for its production, reproduction, and transformation’ (Born 2010, 378).
In addition to the contribution they make to the academic discipline of popular music studies, such efforts to establish methodologies equal to the task of analysing the entire field of popular music practice are valuable for thinking about the popular music museum. They help us to establish an appreciation of how the bridge between personal and collective memory is key to the challenge popular music represents to conventional museum provision, not least because the processes of validating and projecting identity bound up in the involvement with and attachment to music might at first seem better understood by psychology or sociology than a type of institution so deeply entangled with the material world. The outcome of everyday musical experience makes it difficult to objectify in ways that naturally fit the platform of the exhibit.

3.4 Non-monumental scenes and sites

Popular music studies research that concerns the ways in which music is used to create collective social identities highlight another challenge that popular music represents for the museum: a layered and multi-dimensional relation to site which renders it non-monumental. Henri Lefebvre describes monumentality as a ‘singular spatial representation of collective identity’ that condenses ‘all aspects of spatiality’ (Lefebvre 1991, 221). It is precisely this sort of spatial condensation, as well as this relation to collective representation, that the sites of popular music culture routinely overflow or rupture. Born’s ‘social analytics’ of the four planes of mediation points out how complex the cultural space of popular music is, but there is also further evidence of the non-monumental nature of popular music space in the literature on scenes and geographies of popular music.

The concept of the ‘scene’ refers primarily to the social activities and relations through which a cultural identity is created but also implies a location of some sort where this process takes place. Often the city provides the site for an investigation of a music scene, but seldom in an essentialist fashion that would suggest that the character of the scene is dictated by physical location. Sara Cohen’s Rock Culture in Liverpool (1991) is a study of music making by two local, amateur rock bands in Liverpool whose music
remains connected to ordinary life and local community. The city is characterised by its economically challenged post-war history but also by its participation in distribution networks that move culture beyond its immediate landscape. The scene is local but far from isolated. Barry Shank’s *Dissonant Identities* (1994) offers a more narrative ethnography of the bar and club scenes of Austin, Texas, in which participants use music and its imaginary identifications to establish community and transform their personal identity. He notes that the city serves as a resource for inhabitants who have often arrived from other cities or states and gravitate to the various music scenes in order to refashion their lives and selves (Shank 1994, 9). Sarah Thornton’s *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (1995) looked at dance clubs and raves in the UK between 1988–1992, seeking to understand ‘the subtle relations of power at play within them’ (Thornton 1995, 14), and developing the concept of ‘subcultural capital’ from her observations of how prestige and social hierarchy are informed by taste discriminations. This scene is at once more and less local than those described by Cohen or Shank because of the temporary nature of many of its events and the mobility of its members who journey to festivals and travel to other cities to see name DJs. Nick Crossley’s work on music scenes using social network analysis (SNA) provides visualisation of the distributions and densities of participatory membership. It not only pictures a history but can also reveal the centrality of individuals who hardly figure in the more familiar accounts of the London or Manchester music scenes (Crossley 2008; Bottero and Crossley 2011; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015), thus providing another instance of the non-monumental character of music scenes.

Each of these studies is elaborated in reference to a geographically identified ‘scene,’ but each scene connects with a circuit or network that takes it beyond its immediate environs and operates at a different scale. Moreover, while each has a set of core participants and organising principles, each routinely reconfigures and is recreated as a new scene. The term ‘scene’ was originally introduced within popular music studies (Shank 1988; Straw 1991) in order to account for the co-existence of different musical practices.
within a single geographic location and to think about the effects of the emerging global economy on culture. It was also used to call into question what had, unquestionably, been the most important conceptual framework available to the nascent field of popular music studies: the concept of ‘subculture’ (Thornton 1995). Developed at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, the concept of subculture initially provided a powerful intellectual scaffolding for examining the social relations that were organised in relation to specific styles of popular music. Researchers used the term to interpret the rituals and affinities of its subjects as ‘problem solving’ responses to the instabilities within the class system and were often used to create new ‘opportunity structures’ (Hall and Jefferson 1979, 29). Critiqued early on for its indulgence of the reactionary politics of its subjects with regard to race, sex, and territory (Hebdige 1979; McRobbie 1991) and its ‘instrumentalisation of culture’ (Sterne 2005, 91), questions about its relevance were later qualified in terms of changing historical circumstances such as global capital, post-colonialism, and the influence of media on the dynamics of identification and location (Bhabha 1994; Bennett 2004; Huq 2006); and the question of a disappearance of the category ‘youth’ (Redhead 1997; Kotarba 2002). The notion of subculture increasingly becomes viewed as an historical one and was challenged by scene (and a number of other terms) that sought to better describe the dynamic nature, shape, and effects of involvements with popular music culture.

The term scene described ‘situations where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004, 3). Scenes are generally characterised by an informal, participatory character, but are also understood to often have strong interest in creating distinctions between insiders and others based on taste affinities (Thornton 1995, 8). Scenes are generally associated with the sorts of spaces we usually think of as public—bars, clubs, festivals, and record stores—but are not, however, strictly limited to physical locations. Scenes also take shape within virtual spaces such as chat rooms and on social media. According to Bennett and Peterson, in addition to localised scenes there are also ‘translocal’ scenes, which spill
across geographic boundaries (as found in hip-hop or amongst Deadheads; and ‘virtual’
scenes such as those created by Kate Bush fans) which exist online. With this develop-
ment, the term ‘scene’ not only describes the possibility of a geographic locations being
host to several social formations but also recognises how several institutions, identity
formations, media channels, and economies can intersect within a single cultural location,
enabling process of social identity formation that are mediated by imagined community
as readily as those close to home (Gilroy 1993). Thus, the concept of the ‘scene’ conveys
a sense of the non-monumental—always moving and reconfiguring, often mobilised
through acts of imagination.

Geography has frequently been used to root musical practice in specific mythical loca-
tions (Gillett 1983; Marcus 1975); it has also been used as the background for music’s
insistent migrant movement across borders and boundaries (Taylor 1997; Connell and
Gibson 2003; Kahn-Harris 2006). Analysis of the spatial dimensions of identity formation,
both in terms of local practice and in terms of the dislocative effects that can foster
‘dual consciousness’ or ‘multi-locality’, has also been an important ongoing part of the
discussion of the cultural influence of popular music (McRobbie and Garber 1976;
Zuberi 2001; Huq 2006). Most recently, popular music has been considered in terms of
the geographies of network space (Kibby 2010; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015)
and the sites of popular music heritage (Cohen et al. 2015; Baker 2015). What is
apparent in all of these spatial-oriented investigations of popular music culture is the
insistence on the layered and changeable nature of the connections.

Connell and Gibson recognise that popular music never simply expresses place but is
linked to it ‘at different scales’ through identity, economics, and technology, and the fact
that the connections of popular music to location are ideological, subject to contestation,
and routinely ‘transformed through spatial mobility’ has determined the way popular music
studies approaches questions of geography and location (Connell and Gibson 2003, 10).
They use the terms fluidity and fixity for ‘describing and understanding processes that
move across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations’ (Ibid., 17). Drawing upon several anthropological studies, Connell and Gibson argue that because migration, cultural diffusion and acculturation have directly influenced the development of all kinds of music since its earliest beginnings, notions of the authentically local as something distinct have ‘always been open to doubt’. With specific regard to popular music, they recognize that because ‘recording separates consumption from production and because ‘technology prefigures mobility’, its sites and scenes are always subject to dislocation. But attempts to create homogenization through global cultural circuits have failed to erase the distinctiveness of ‘persistent regional variations’ (Connell and Gibson 2003).

Other musical geographies (Leyshon, Matless, and Revill 1995; Jazeel 2005; Graves 2012) also routinely remark on the paradox of the relation of the local to the global—not only in terms of its formal effects or the discourses of authenticity but also in relation to political concerns relating to cultural appropriation and exploitation. Much of the recent research about specific popular music scenes tends to provide detailed historical accounts while simultaneously demonstrating a keen appreciation of the constructedness of the location as a site of collective memory (Cohen 2007; Webb 2007; Hayes 2006) shot through by international music ‘flows’ (Moon, Barnett, and Lim 2010) and shaped by the border crossings of musicians (Borgo 2010) and revitalised for consumption through music tourism (Brocken 2015; Krüger and Trandafoiu 2013). There is also research recognising the geographies of virtual scenes and sites that addresses the permeation of space by electronic media within games (Miller 2012), virtual worlds (Gértrudix and Gértrudix 2012), and cloud culture (Leadbeater 2010).

Popular music studies has identified popular music as a cultural force that ‘mediates larger social-cultural currents’ (Born 2001) and routinely undermines the ‘singular spatial representation of collective identity’ (Lefebvre 1991). Its non-monumental character extends to both space and sociality. Consequently, its need to be ‘articulated in contingent
ways through relations of synergy, affordance, conditioning, or causality (Born 2011, 76) will challenge the popular music museum to represent its subject without uncritically relying on a master narrative or other monumental model of space.

3.5 Fandom and contested ownership

The study of popular music fan activity, or fandom, reveals how the personal meaning made from popular music can frequently involve contests of ownership. In this section we examine the literature on popular music fandom that discusses how active engagement of popular music audiences enables a sense of ownership. We will also look at the ways in which independent heritage initiatives (treated here as form of fandom) introduce us to the concept of the ‘amateur expert’ and raise questions of interpretive authority for the museum.

Fan studies are grounded in the assumption that the audience of popular culture has agency, and the rejection of the notion that consumption is passive. Recognising the enchanting power of stardom and celebrity some of the earliest discussion of celebrity affect—found in Edgar Morin’s *The Stars* (1960) and Daniel Boorstin’s *The Image* (1962)—also acknowledged an active dimension of the passion of fans. However, it was in the aftermath of the heyday of mass culture research in the 1970s that fandom began to emerge as a respectable academic concept (Duffett 2013, 18) which could differentiate between types of fans, analyse the relation of media to fan activity, and track the influence of gender and sexuality on patterns of audience engagement.

The literature on popular culture fandom often draws a distinction between participatory and interpretive fan activity. Participatory fandom plays a prominent role in research relating to films and television programmes such as *Harry Potter*, *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* which place emphasis on the social aspects of audience involvement in the creation of fan-fiction (Penley 1991) and fan communities (Cornell 1997; Brenner 2015). Other studies focus on the interpretive processes enacted by audiences (Fiske 1992; Jenkins
and often link them to specific purposes related to gender or sexual identity (Radway 1984; Deangelis 2014).

Fan studies refutes the idea that the producers and distributors of popular culture have primary or exclusive ownership, offering instead documentation of how fans assert their agency to claim cultural ownership of various objects and properties. It sees ownership not in legal terms but in cultural terms, according to attachment and use.

Fan studies pertaining to popular music does not tend to highlight the distinction between interpretive and participatory. Instead, these studies routinely offer recognition of the dual nature of fandom, drawing jointly upon the general discussions of celebrity-fan relations as well as the previously mentioned investigations of music scenes and music in everyday life. This awareness of the continuum of audience activity is evident in a number of foundational studies, including Christopher Small’s *Musiking* (1998), Matt Hills’s *Fan Cultures* (2002) and Mark Duffett’s *Popular Music Fandom* (2014).

Small convincingly argues that music is not a thing but an activity, one that encompasses the many actions relating to music: composing, practising, performing, listening, organising events, and dancing (Small 1998, 9). Hills similarly cautions against seeing fandom as a thing, identifying it instead as a complex, performative relation to culture, the meaning of which shifts according to institutional context (Hills 2002, x). For Mark Duffett:

> [M]usic fandom is one term for a wide range of phenomena and identifications occurring in a variety of different times and places, a term that encompasses a range of tastes, roles, identities, and practices. (Duffett 2013, 27)

The overlap of the interpretive and the participatory closely parallels that of the personal and collective aspects of attachment that make fandom difficult to reduce to a single or primary explanation (Hills 2002, 13). In order to address this complexity, Hills uses
Winnicott’s psychoanalytic concept of the ‘transitional object’ to explain how the artist, programme or other cultural object mediates between the individual’s internal and external realities, creating a ‘third space’ (Hills 2002, 113). In short, the fan attaches to the object in a personal and subjective manner, but the object’s inter-subjective aspect prevents it from existing simply as imagined reality or hallucination. Thus, a ‘transitional object’ preserves the distinctiveness of the subject’s attachment within a broader set of connections. For Hills, the importance of this framework is that it affirms the fan’s sense of ownership rather than seeing their involvement as an effect of the media or its industries (Ibid., 73–4).

One of the earliest, and still most idiosyncratic, studies of popular music fandom was published in 1985 by Fred Vermorel; it comprises fifty-four erotic fantasies, diary entries, and fan letters addressed to popular musicians as diverse as David Bowie and Barry Manilow.\(^2\) The book documents the appropriative use of the celebrity image by fans to enable the projection of romantic fantasies and ideal versions of the self. Similar considerations regularly emerge in discussions of Elvis fans which both ‘rehabilitate the fantasies of fans’ (Hinerman 1992, 131) and explore the forms of secular devotion that attach to his multivalent image (Doss 1999). In many of the studies of the fans of specific artists, such as David Bowie (Stevenson 2006) or Morrissey (Devereux, Dillane, and Power 2012), it is often seen that the star’s narrative also ‘anchors a narrative of self’ (Stevenson 2006, 183).

Another early study by Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs also remarks on the ‘erotics of the star-fan relationship’ in reference to the spread of Beatlemania to the U.S.A. (1992, 100). However, in addition to analysing the historical significance of girls actively making their idols into objects of desire, the study also explores how the ‘shared hysteria’ gave rise to camaraderie amongst Beatles fans (Ibid., 87). An unintended effect of the industry

\(^2\) Vermorel claims to have undertaken over three years of research, amassing 350 interviews, 400 written replies to questionnaires, 1,200 pages of media analysis, and approximately 40,000 fan letters from which the writings in the book Starlust have been sourced.
promotions of the group (which were very much invested in creating hysteria), this social dimension of Beatlemania points to the possibility of spontaneous audience agency and highlights the importance of stars as ‘embodiments of social categories’ (Dyer 1986, 17).

The literature on popular music fandom provides several other examples of studies that explore fan relations that draw upon the values represented by the band or artist to articulate collective experience. Most well known are those that focus on artists or bands like Bruce Springsteen (Cavicchi 1998), Elvis (Rubinkowski 1997; Doss 1999), and REM (Bennett and Peterson 2004), or genres such as heavy metal (Brown and Griffin 2014) or noise music (Atton 2011). Common themes within this subset of research relate to both the ‘construction of a communal social body’ (Duffett 2014, 331) and the tendency of fans to create boundaries and internal divisions to define and protect authenticity.

Like the female fans of the early-era Beatles, those of REM or Bruce Springsteen similarly create networks of relations that allow for camaraderie and a sense of a shared significance. According to Hills, such alignments reflect psychological processes that Winnicott describes as relating to ‘secondary transitional objects’. These contrast with ‘primary transitional objects’ because they re-contextualize the primary attachment within an inter-subjective cultural experience in which a ‘third space’ is localised and shared, rendering it neither ‘purely internal nor external’ (Hills 2002, 77). Thus, a sense of group ethos or community is created through the fan’s passionate attachment. The significance of this is multi-dimensional, but key for our investigation is the way in which it validates the idea that popular music belongs to its fans and the way that sense of ownership helps create a feeling of expertise.

Fans participate in processes that involve drawing ‘specific boundaries around an object of fandom’ (Duffett 2014, 53); debating, for instance, the political difference between punk and new wave, the genealogies of house and techno, or which genres of music belong under the umbrella of ‘rock and roll’. The drawing of boundaries can at times
seem intensely fetishistic—as is evident in Jennifer Bickerdike’s case study of fans of dead stars like Kurt Cobain and Ian Curtis. In a book-length study of the ‘second lives’ of those two dead stars, Bickerdike argues that the devotion they inspire is rooted in each possessing a body of work ‘which illustrates frustration, isolation, and deep-seated criticism’ (Bickerdike 2014, 8), which makes the mobilisation of two enduring cultural narratives possible. The first is the longstanding Romantic legacy that connects authenticity with youth and death; the other is the sequence of events characteristic of canonization (Ibid., 12). Questioning the process of fetishization from within the fan communities of Cobain and Curtis risks undermining the value of the devotion as well as the legitimacy of one’s own membership. Reflecting on Daniel Cavicchi’s study of Bruce Springsteen fans, *Tramps Like Us* (1998), Mark Duffett notes that the distinctions drawn by fans using the word ‘love’ allows for the creation of fan community—it constructs the ‘communal social body’ through the exclusion of ‘ordinary listeners’ (2014, 331). Fans claim a deeper attachment that intensifies the feelings of appreciation, connection, and knowledge according to a protective and possessive understanding of ‘love’. ‘Love is therefore a boundary word. It defines the edge of the knowing field through which fans self-identify’ (Duffett 2013, 160). Additionally, especially in the context of the Internet, fans will draw distinctions within their communities of interest to identify authenticity and establish status or rank. Making reference to Lady Gaga’s online followers, Duffett notes: ‘fans themselves can also lever such critiques to degrade and dismiss fractions of their own brethren that they consider inferior’ (Duffett 2014, 22).

The explosion of fan activity online has transformed the terrain of popular music. The Internet on the one hand extends the reach of the music industry, increasing its ability to shape the frameworks of fandom, and on the other hand it expands the range of spaces within which audience agency remains visible. Of particular interest here is the emergence of independent popular music heritage initiatives that reinforce existing claims of cultural ownership and provide evidence of the existence of forms of non-professional or amateur expertise.
The industry-driven distribution networks and product cycles of popular music that characterised the first forty years of the history of popular music have been irreversibly altered by the invention of peer-to-peer file sharing, social media, and easy access to music and music-related content. The Internet has both erased the rough dividing line between the spaces belonging to industry and audience and diminished the significance of the difference between the music of yesterday and today for many young listeners (Krumhansel 2013). In addition to creating what has been characterised as a feeling of ‘cultural stasis’ (Duffett 2013, 20) or ‘retromania’ (Reynolds 2011), the ready availability of the popular music past has reconfigured the contours of fandom.

A vast array of recorded music and performance footage has become freely available in the digital mediascape. This immersive environment exposes material previously left—or lost—to generational memory, changing the traditional foundation of cultural capital (Duffett 2013, 21).

As the audience and industry spaces increasingly overlap, fandom’s assertion of audience agency and ability to advance claims of cultural ownership are called into question—not only for overstating the political potential of audiences by ‘finding creative resistance in every act of consumption’ (Straw 2010, 210), but also for ignoring the role of the culture industries in harnessing the productivities of fans (Hills 2002; McLean, Oliver, and Wainwright 2010), and overlooking how the life of rock stars are themselves like products ‘brief and vibrant’ (Bickerdike 2014, 9). However, while recognition of the importance of fandom’s mediation by industrial processes (Duffett 2014, 49) is critical, it is equally important to recognise the influence of the Internet on how fandom’s sense of community, distinction, and ownership are reconfigured. The question of what fans do within or with media is as important as what media and media industries do to reshape the landscape upon which fans operate.

One of the most active areas of music-related fan activity online relates to popular music cultural heritage. According to cultural sociologist Andy Bennett, this upsurge
reveals ‘a globally connected informal network of activity oriented towards re-writing contemporary popular music history’ (2009, 483). In the literature on the topic the link between fandom and archiving is directly addressed in several places. According to Brandellero and Janssen, ‘bottom-up, often amateur or fan-initiated practices have come to fill an institutional void of preservation and remembrance’ (2014, 237). Duffett and Lobert (2015), discussing photo swapping amongst Take That fans, note something similar: ‘heritage preservation is not a predisposition primarily chosen by pop fans in relation to their object but is something forced on them with the passage of time.’ (2015, 160) If certain fan-based activities result in situational or accidental archives, these exist alongside more intentional heritage initiatives. For Jez Collins, a prominent contributor to both the literature on popular music heritage and independent archiving efforts in the UK, the link between fan cultures and popular music heritage is central. In order to make clear the importance of the connection of popular music history to its communities and (often local) social history, he offers an analysis that underscores the activist aspect of the independent archiving of music history (Collins 2015; Collins and Carter 2015). Thus, the idea that independent online heritage compensates for the absence of formal institutional frameworks for preserving popular music heritage operates in tandem with the idea that independent archiving protects against the potential for institutional responses, where they do exist, to impose master narratives which might erase or marginalise the cultures of fandom.

The literature specific to online heritage reiterates that of the more general consideration of popular music fandom, framing collecting and archiving activities as a form of fan activity. The distributions of online culture are often viewed as being ‘democratic in the treatment of knowledge’ in ways that change the terms of authority and ownership (Collins and Long 2014, 86). For instance, the ‘autobiographical attachments [that] symbolise a form of ownership’ are fragmented by widespread accessibility (Fobes 2015, 143). And the development of grassroots initiatives are interpreted as ‘suggestive of the ways in which communities and individuals within those communities show
interest in asserting ownership over, and expertise in, the cultural history of popular music’ (Baker and Huber 2013, 514). This is especially so in reference to feminist archives where great emphasis is placed on the co-ownership of the local history (Withers 2015). What comes to the fore in this context are the forms of cultural ownership ‘where vernacular expertise, coupled with community, has the potential to contribute to the public record’ (Baker 2015, 212).

The literature on popular music heritage also reveals how the questions of ownership are, at the same time, questions of knowledge and expertise. For instance, Les Roberts and Sara Cohen developed a detailed analysis of how the objects of official and unofficial heritage are differently configured—as ‘heritage-as-object’ and ‘heritage-as-praxis’, respectively—and how different claims of credibility circulate in relation to each (Cohen and Roberts 2014, 234–5). Institutional forms of heritage (including heritage plaques and popular music museums) seem to operate in this context as the other to the audience and its agency, which expresses itself through fandom. Such tensions between various forms of credibility recall an essay by Joli Jensen in which she discusses a trip to Nashville to complete research on her dissertation subject: Patsy Cline. During her stay, Jensen meets a fan named Don Roy who works at a department store and knows everything there was to know about the singer. He provides Jensen with detailed research material that helps her complete her PhD and become ‘the first Patsy Cline scholar’. Jensen writes: ‘Don Roy was my first experience with how a fan/collector can be a vernacular scholar’ (Jensen 2014, 429). Several years later, continuing her Patsy Cline research online, Jensen finds a plethora of fan sites: another occasion for recognizing that ‘fans and scholars are doing very similar things, and the Internet helps us see this more fully’ (Ibid., 430). Without academic credentials, fans nevertheless undertake a type of scholarship that is ‘certified by the opinion of other fans’ and, as Baym and Burnett in a discussion based on the example of the Swedish independent music scene recognise, like archivists, do valuable work when they ‘sift, sort, label, translate, rate, and annotate a large, disorganised, and geographically remote set of cultural materials’ (Jensen 2014, 434).
Through the sourcing, collecting, and interpreting of documents the sense of audience ownership is established; at the same time, such activities produce expertise. Fandom can thus be seen as integral to knowledge creation within the world of popular music heritage. While this has long been the case, the Internet provides new contexts for fandom and new opportunities for knowledge distribution that have ‘blurred the line between amateur and professional’ (Duffett 2013, 20–1). Given such conditions, the popular music museum can expect to face the tension between its institutional identity which suggests it might exercise a monopoly over historical interpretation, and its identity as a part of the world of popular music culture within which fandom serves to distribute expertise and interpretive authority.

With these concepts in mind, we now turn to the case studies that provide the opportunity to think about what it means for popular music to make its home in the museum, to explore the overhaul of the museum’s values, techniques, and relations this might entail, and to anticipate the opportunities that this new content might introduce.
4.1 Introduction

This chapter uses the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as its primary case study for examining how the popular music museum reframes the value of the collection. It describes how the popular music museum finds value in mass-produced objects and engages the social imaginary of a culture that has been created through personal participation. And it demonstrates how the popular music museum, by declining certain conventions of materiality, offers a model of the museum collection that is shaped at its inception by media and the influence of intangible heritage.

Making reference to material artefacts exhibited by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—including John Lennon’s guitar, Run-D.M.C.’s Adidas Superstar sneakers, and Jimi Hendrix’s handwritten lyrics—it proposes a model of value which identifies the specific frameworks employed by the popular music museum for securing the value of its collection. Thus, we are able to demonstrate how the high culture, low culture rhetoric upon which many distinctions in other cultural realms hinge remains largely irrelevant for the popular music museum. This in turn permits us to map the popular music’s field of value in a way that responds to its unique history as a culture born of mass production and media, commercialism and affect.

This chapter also examines three challenges that arise as a result of popular music taking up residence within the museum. The first concerns the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s use of the ‘rock canon’ as its primary narrative framework, a concept that invokes elitism within the popular and raises contentious questions of authority and ownership. The second is the paradox of its audience’s ambivalence toward pluralism, a principle highly valued throughout the museum sector and conventionally associated with popular culture. The chapter concludes with a discussion of a third challenge, the seemingly irresolvable dilemma for the popular music museum of its ‘other immateriality’: sound and song.
Examining these challenges, it becomes evident that each requires extraordinary agility on the part of the museum. For in order to match the qualities of its subject in a manner that is resonant, the museum must understand its cultural logic and adapt to its somewhat confounding internal contradictions. In the course of this inquiry it also becomes evident that media plays a central role in constituting popular music and defining its culture and thus exercises a profound influence on how the collection of the popular music museum is understood and shaped. Overall, this discussion will help us to see how the process of creating the popular music museum’s collection involves absorbing and modifying cultural categories that it has drawn from both popular music culture and cultural heritage and how the negotiation of their differences gives rise to a new type of museum, one that emerges from within a popular culture where media is a given.

4.2 Background to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

Establishment

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, an institution whose name and location have become a synecdoche for the popular music museum, will serve as the central case study for this chapter. As the first major museum of its kind, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame offers a particularly useful example of how a collecting institution answers the challenge of establishing the value of popular music as cultural heritage. Its collection has been influential in determining what is considered museum-worthy and has provided
the backdrop against which other popular music museums have had to develop their focus, scope, and collection strategies.

Several discussions in 1983 between attorney Suzan Evans and Ahmet Ertegun, founder of Atlantic Records, led to the establishment of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation in April of that year. In addition to Evans and Ertegun, the foundation’s first board and induction committee included Rolling Stone founder Jann Wenner, record executives Seymour Stein, Noreen Woods, and Bob Krasnow, attorney Allen Grubman, and musician and producer Nile Rodgers. At their August 5, 1985 board meeting it was agreed the Foundation, in addition to hosting an annual induction ceremony, would also establish a museum to ‘honor rock and roll’s greatest contributors and influences’ (Adams 2002, 567). The first induction ceremony took place in New York City in 1986 with the museum opening approximately a decade later—after several years of popular advocacy, difficult public relations spats and development negotiations, and demanding fundraising campaigns—on September 1, 1995. That the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ended up in Cleveland, rather than New York City as had been originally planned, was the result of the efforts of Cleveland’s Mayor, George Voinovich, the Ohio Governor, Richard Celeste, and members of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce and Greater Cleveland Growth Association, who in the early eighties, having seen the opportunities for economic development so routinely referenced today in discussions of the post-industrial city, relentlessly courted the Foundation with offers of land, approvals and funding. Equally significant were the efforts of the citizens of Cleveland, who rallied to express their support in numerous ways, including casting 110,315 pay-per-call votes in favour of locating the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland in response to a telephone poll sponsored by national newspaper USA Today on January 20 1986. Memphis, the second-place city, trailed way behind Cleveland with about eight thousand votes (Adams 2002, 570). By the time the $92 million building designed by architect

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3 Sara Cohen and Les Roberts offer a more detailed consideration of how popular music cultural heritage is used as a tool of urban regeneration in ‘Sites of Popular Music Heritage’ 2015.
I.M. Pei opened in 1995, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame had established its exhibition programme and amassed a collection of over 100,000 items (Adams 2002, 580).

**Collection**

For the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame the winnowing of the apparent limitless world of popular music production rested on ‘telling the story of rock ’n’ roll and finding the things that are crucial to that story’ as determined by subject area experts (Henke 2011). Vice President of Exhibitions and Curatorial Affairs James Henke was hired in 1994 as the museum’s second curator (replacing folklorist Bruce Harrah-Conforth) and charged with continuing the development of the collection and creating the first permanent exhibits. To guide this process, Henke established an outline of the history of rock and roll in a manner resembling that used to edit a book: dividing the topic into chapters as a method for ‘identifying the materials needs for a credible exhibit on each topic’ (Henke 2011). Henke’s background as a music editor at Rolling Stone magazine, and specifically his work on *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll: The Definitive History of the Most Important Artists and Their Music* (1992), guided the process of collection and the creation of the exhibits. By following the protocols of a ‘definitive history’, Henke was implying a particular aspiration of the institution: to be definitive and canonical.

While the assembly of the collection has certainly been deeply informed by Henke’s previous experience as a writer and editor for Rolling Stone, museum collecting is always a serendipitous process involving a number of parties: private collectors and patrons, artists, their families and estates, companies, and auction houses. Some of the museum’s most high-profile early acquisitions—including a number of items from Sam Phillips’s Sun Records studio and the handwritten lyrics to Jimi Hendrix’s ‘Purple Haze’, which had a $17,600 price tag when the museum acquired it acquired at auction.

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4 Peter Blecha’s book *Rock ‘n’ Roll Archeologists* (2005) provides a detailed chronicle of the process of amassing Seattle’s Experience Music Project’s collection but there is no equivalent account for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
came to the collection through the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation, which exists as a separate entity. The museum is defined by its legal identity as a nonprofit educational facility, which allows it to issue tax receipts for donations. In 1991 it instituted a ‘no purchase policy’ and has, since then, relied almost exclusively upon the generosity of those willing to make gifts via the Foundation to expand the collection (Rotenstein 1992).

Henke is quick to acknowledge the importance of cultivating relationships with various benefactors, especially artists and the family members who inherit their estates. Like many other museums, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame acquired and continues to expand its collection in an opportunistic manner (Henke 2011). Early on, the museum’s collection benefited from donations from its founding board members Ahmet Ertegun and Jann Wenner, as well as from gifts from the families of Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison. In 1994, Yoko Ono contributed a sizable collection of John Lennon artefacts to the collection. Personal connections have also resulted in some unusual acquisitions, such a dread of Bob Marley’s hair, which was given as a gift by his family (Henke 2011). The ongoing growth of the collection focuses on working with the inductees to organise contributions to the collection so that it accurately reflects the world it is meant to represent.

Exhibitions

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is a six-storey building. The first two floors house the permanent exhibits, the Hall of Fame gallery and theatre occupy the third and fourth floors (along with a café and a 164-seat theatre), while the fifth and six floors are used for temporary exhibitions (and a studio from which Sirius radio broadcasts). The initial permanent exhibits focus on Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, rock 'n' roll stage costumes, the early years, protests against rock 'n' roll, heavy metal, soul music, the history of radio and recording, rock photography, two guitar exhibits (one focusing on Les Paul, another on guitars used by legendary artists), a documentary film entitled Mystery Train, and
two interactive exhibits: *Experience the Music and The Beat Goes On* interactive jukeboxes. Redesigns in 2011 and 2012 tightened the overall chronological sequence of the presentations and reorganised the display of artefacts so they would represent eras and genres of music in reference to specific cities—using exhibit titles such as *Detroit: ‘Dancin’ in the Street: 1962–1971’* and *San Francisco: ‘Somebody to Love: 1965–1969’*—and adding region-specific exhibits such as *Cleveland Rocks* and *Kick Out the Jams: The Music of the Midwest*. The Beatles exhibit underwent a major redesign in order to create ‘the most comprehensive, artefact-driven Beatles exhibit in the world’ (Henke 2011). And the museum created a new exhibit space entitled *Right Here, Right Now* which focuses on contemporary artists—such as Rihanna, Black Keys, Fall Out Boy and Katy Perry—whose historical contribution in terms of innovation, artistic excellence, or social significance has yet to be confirmed by popular consensus, critical reflection, or through the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s own official induction process (Henke 2011).

The Hall of Fame exhibit includes short documentaries about each year’s inductees that are screened in a large multi-screen theatre space and a wall of artists’ autographs.

Since its inception, the museum has presented temporary exhibitions focusing on artists such as Otis Redding, John Lennon, and the Clash; on styles of music or music scenes such as psychedelic rock, Two-Tone, or hip-hop; music-related media such as the movies *Help* and *Tommy*, radio stations such as WMMS or magazines such as Sepia; the work of rock photographers such as Mike McCartney and Alfred Wertheimer; or events such as Woodstock or the Concert for Bangladesh.

As Henke’s illustrative method indicates, collecting for a new museum anticipates the creation of the exhibits that will help tell the story of popular music in a credible and comprehensive fashion. Both the temporary and permanent exhibitions reveal the influence of several key categories, some of which persist over time (artist, event, genre, costumes, iconic instruments, and technological innovation), and others which shift attention to new concerns (cities and scenes, the role of media, and gender identity).
Recent Developments

In addition to the redesign of the permanent exhibits, the museum also recently saw the completion of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s Library and Archive at Cuyahoga Community College. According to Librarian Andy Leach, such a facility had long been a part of the museum’s plans and so the collecting of archival materials has been ongoing for many years. Its holdings include over 5,000 audio and visual items, a similar number of books, and ‘over 1,000 linear feet of archival materials’: unpublished materials such as artists’ correspondence, manuscripts, contracts, architectural plans, and music industry records (Leach 2011). While the Library hosts its own displays and collaborates with the museum on the research and development of exhibitions, its information systems are not fully integrated.\(^5\)

At the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame the material artefacts are given centre stage and yet the supportive media is often crucial to bringing the story to life. Short documentaries such as *Mystery Train*, *Kick Out the Jams*, *Video Killed the Radio Star*, and *Rock Is* have been commissioned or created by the museum and, in the case of the latter, screened in a purpose-built theatre.\(^6\) Most recently the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archive announced that it will make sections of the oral histories it has been ‘secretly’ recording over the last four years available online, and allow visitors to the archive to access the complete documents (Greene 2015).

4.3 Finding value in mass-produced objects

The collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame includes numerous ‘star’ artefacts which immediately register as important to the history of rock 'n' roll: John Lennon’s 1963 Gretsch 6120 (Fig. 4.3), Jimi Hendrix’s handwritten first draft for the lyrics to “Purple Haze” (Fig. 4.4), Bob Marley’s dreadlock (Fig. 4.5). Other items, such as a pair of Adidas

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\(^5\) The Library combines Millennium, Hydrangea, and the Archivist Toolkit, while the Museum uses a product called The Museum System to catalogue its artefacts.

\(^6\) The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame had a second ‘Annex’ location in New York City that included an ‘orientation room’ in which visitors experienced an amusement ride version of rock and roll’s ‘shaking the foundations of American life’. 
or a cache of hotel keys, seem barely removed from the world of everyday use where they exist indistinctly, as one of many. Still other materials—ticket stubs, road cases, and fanzines—appear to be what founding curator Bruce Harrah-Conforth has characterised as ‘byproducts of rock and roll’. In this section we see, through the example of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, how the popular music museum’s collection establishes its value and authenticity without employing conventional distinctions between high and low culture or automatically assigning a lack of authenticity to items that are mass produced.

Figure 4.3 John Lennon with Gretsch. Source: TrackAuction.
Figure 4.4 Hendrix’s hand written ‘Purple Haze’ lyrics. Photograph by author.
Figure 4.5 Bob Marley. Photograph by Eddie Mallin.

A number of these items would also register as valuable within James Clifford’s ‘Art-Culture System’ or even more readily within Kevin Moore’s value plot, for the collection contains many things that are custom-made, singular, or unique. But even so, the nature of their value for the popular music museum would only be partially disclosed. Making direct reference to a number of the artefacts belonging to the collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, in this section we will demonstrate how the value of material culture for the popular music museum is recognised and sustained in reference to canonical,

biographical, social-political, and personal narratives in conjunction with its rhetorical function as an item for public exhibition. The diagram is developed in several stages and reveals how mass-produced objects exist alongside other types of objects, dissolving the distinction between high and low culture within the popular music museum’s value framework. This part of the investigation concludes with a discussion of how the popular music museum’s collecting practices compare with, on the one hand, those that characterise private collectors and the memorabilia market and, on the other, those of the museum sector at large. Having found the significance of personal meaning asserting itself at various points throughout the discussion of the value of the popular music museum’s collection, the investigation looks at this issue in greater detail and, subsequently, suggests how the value of the collection might come to include intangible heritage as well as material culture.

Rejecting the high culture/low culture distinction

When asked in an interview how the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame selected what to include in its collection, Curator Jim Henke explained particulars of the process but also offered a more philosophical reflection on the institution’s collecting activities. Popular music, he declared, is ‘an art form that is available anywhere’ and, as such, is one which seems at odds with the museum as a place occupied by things that ‘you otherwise wouldn’t be able to see’ (Henke 2011). What his comment points to is the lingering influence of the tradition of defining the museum in terms of ‘high’ culture, with its emphasis on rare and inaccessible objects, distinct and remote from everyday life and the familiar and accessible objects of popular music in opposition to that tradition. Of course this characterisation of the disjunction between popular music and the museum is rhetorical, and Henke’s comment is meant to underscore the difference between the popular music museum as a specific type of ‘post museum’ (Bruce 2006) and the museum sector at large—an understanding of the popular music museum’s project that also reverberates in interviews with the Head Librarian of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives (Leach 2011) and the curator of the Experience Music
Project (Emmons 2011). And it is in relation to this difference that the popular music museum finds its own specific value, a value that can only be imagined once the popular is released from its role as placeholder for a generalized cultural location of class-determined lack.

Early scholarly reflections on collecting and archiving twentieth-century popular culture all note the conservative reaction of cultural institutions (Adam 1939; Zolberg 1980; Schroeder 1981; Mayo 1981). These studies point to a variety of reasons why collecting and exhibiting the materials of cultures born of mass production, mass marketing, and media prove difficult for the museum. These include ‘social elitism’ and a concern about the ‘trivialization’ of culture (Schroeder 1981); general institutional resistance to innovation (Zolberg 1980); the absence of any clear rationale for including popular culture; and, relatedly, the lack of institutional expertise in contemporary collecting (Mayo 1981). Speaking several years later, from within the context of the postmodern ‘crisis of representation’, Kevin Moore (1997, 4) also remarks on how popular culture continues to meet ‘a great deal of resistance’ entering the museum. His detailed and thoughtful consideration of the topic weaves together several concerns. One is with the presupposition within the cultural sector that ‘popular material culture’ is inherently inauthentic and the ‘exclusion of the materials of popular culture’ from public institutions (Moore 1997, 4), which Moore insists have ‘a duty to reflect the history of ordinary people, not least because they paid for museums through their taxes’ (Ibid., 6). Moore’s thesis, especially in terms of its efforts to address and unsettle prevailing assumptions about how the opposition between high culture and low culture determines museum value, is particularly helpful in explaining how the museum does find value in mass-produced objects. However, the example of the popular music museum raises some questions about the validity of Moore’s contention that, even in the realm of popular culture, material culture is the museum’s ‘critical resource’ (Moore 1997, 23).

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8 This is in contrast to the popular culture of earlier centuries that tends to inscribe itself within the context of social history and fairly easily validated as folk culture.
Moore’s study builds on Susan Pearce’s research on material culture and collecting practices (1995; 1998) that, in turn, draws upon James Clifford’s influential analysis of the art-culture system (1988). As we saw in Chapter 2, the conventional opposition between the authentic and the non-authentic or spurious found in Clifford’s descriptive diagram aligns the latter with mass production and commercial culture and interprets it as a generalized cultural location lacking in value. In its subsequent reworking by Pearce and Moore there is a de-coupling of popular culture from the non-authentic. This introduces a sense of contingency to museum value, which can make room for considering some of the mass-produced materials of popular culture as valuable.

Clifford’s diagrammatic description of the art-culture system certainly proved useful for illuminating the way in which traditional museums differentiated between anthropological and aesthetic value. Nevertheless, however effective it might have been in addressing the ‘predicament’ of the authority of Eurocentric ethnographic scholarship, the ‘art-culture system’ proved limited in terms of its aim of ‘open[ing] space for cultural futures, for the recognition of emergence’ (15), at least insofar as that idea might apply to popular culture. Leaving mass-produced objects (along with reproductions and things newly manufactured) in the lower realm of the inauthentic had, as was noted in Chapter 2, reflexively identified the popular as a generalized cultural location of lack. Neither Pearce nor Moore accept the immediate association of popular culture with inauthenticity, however, the accommodations of popular culture are qualified: a mass-produced object is elevated to museum status when it exemplifies a process of production or stands for an entire set of social relations that surround it; when it represents design excellence; or when it becomes a product of individual creativity through customization. Consequently, the spurious remains an anchor at the bottom of both Pearce and Moore’s contingent value plots providing implicit recognition of the museum’s need to be selective.

The continued use of the term ‘spurious’ to mark the outer limit of museum value may have been usefully employed by Pearce and Moore to maintain the museum’s identification
with selectiveness, but the use of the vertical axis to define authenticity in opposition to the spurious (non-authentic rubbish) also maintained a residual sense of the opposition of high and low. Consequently, much of what belongs to the popular music museum would remain difficult, and perhaps impossible, to properly evaluate using the existing tools. To uncover the value specific to those objects that enter the popular music museum requires another analytic approach—one that operates without recourse to the traditional binary formulation of cultural value. This involves plotting the value of popular culture in a manner that presupposes mass production as a very strong likelihood, placing less emphasis on the exclusion of certain categories of material culture and more on the criteria for inclusion. In short, one that conceives of value in more fully relational terms, in a way that corresponds to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s collecting practices.

The museum’s process for developing the collection, outlined in an interview with James Henke, was organised by an editorial interest in creating a ‘credible exhibit’ (2011) representing the ‘definitive history’ of rock ’n’ roll as proposed by *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll* (1992). Reflecting the social-historical context, Henke noted, was also integral to the building of the collection:

> It’s always been important that we put the music in the context of the society and political events and this isn’t coincidental. It is important to tell the story of the artists and go beyond and tell the story of how the music impacted the world’ (Henke 2011).

Henke’s mention of the influence of the artists and their families in terms of what is made available to the museum is also significant. What this makes visible is a process by which several criteria operate simultaneously to enable and constrain the creation of the collection. These sorts of dynamics are very easy to imagine in practical terms as the negotiations and substitutions characteristic of the curatorial process are played out in relation to condition reports, the arrangements of loans, and the semiotic interplay of individual artworks or artefacts. But it is equally important to bring this sense of
variability and adaptation into the more reflective realm of theory. What Henke’s com-
ments make evident regarding the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s collecting practice is
that it is co-extensive with the process of interpretation, and that this process spreads
across several planes even as it attaches to a specific and singular object.

For instance, John Lennon’s 1963 Gretsch 6120 speaks to what Moore identifies as one
of the possible positions for the mass-produced object of popular culture within the
museum: the masterpiece of design. It also operates as an artefact of social history at
the level of its connection with Lennon and the writing of the Beatles song ‘Paperback
Writer’, as well as a more general social history pertaining to the band or, even more
expansively, to the art of rock ’n’ roll. As a mass-produced material object, the Gretsch
guitar has a certain aesthetic value that could figure prominently in a context, such as
that found in the MoMA’s department of Architecture and Design, where design, craft,
or industry provides the reference points for collection and exhibition, or in a museum
of musical instruments where the type of instrument is of primary interest. However,
neither of these serves as a primary point of reference for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
Rather, its provenance, its association with Lennon, and the role it played in a canonical
account of popular music history serve as the pylons around which its value is wound.
Of course, it could be said that such criteria are as relevant to the Gretsch’s value as a piece of memorabilia as they are to its identity as a museum artefact. And, indeed, this would be correct. For the activities of individual collectors of popular music have, as we shall see, proven integral to the creation of the value framework that informs the popular music museum’s collecting practices. However, of the several attributes that distinguish individual and ordinary forms of collecting from the museum’s more systematic or strategic approach, one of the most important is the museum’s consideration of the object’s specific display value, which figures prominently in both acquisition and interpretation. In the example of Lennon’s Gretsch, the object’s usefulness for display depends most importantly on its capacity to lend itself to the story of the Beatles as told through the medium of the exhibit.

Henke’s remarks about the multiple criteria used by the popular music museum also resonate with more recent contributions made to the research on the topic of popular music in the museum (Burgoyne 2003; Brabazon and Mallinder 2006; Leonard 2007), which concur that the value of the material culture of popular music is contingent on a set of narratives or commemorative functions. Of particular note is Marion Leonard’s identification of three conceptual models that underpin the collecting of popular music materials by the museum (Leonard 2007, 152): the canonical, the social-historical, and the aesthetic. Canonical objects are those that speak directly to familiar, often media- and industry-produced versions of popular music history. Social-historical objects are those that connect popular music with broader histories and personal histories of everyday aspects of popular music, while the aesthetic objects are the result of the ‘contextualization of popular music as art’, usually popular music materials (such as album covers and music videos) exhibited within art museums (Leonard 2007).

Leonard’s classification proves useful for developing a response to the question of what a more relational understanding of the value of popular music cultural material might look like. If we start with the original ‘art-culture system’ as a template, we can replace
‘masterpiece’ and ‘artefact’ with what Leonard has identified as the canonical and social-history objects that represent the more public aspects of popular music culture. What this makes evident is that the horizontal axis can be viewed not as two types of things but as two aspects of a process or zones of activity, for the canonical side of the plot aligns with the artist and the process of creation (which can include the creation of the performance), while the side of social history aligns with the audience and the processes of consumption, both of which are mediated by the music industry. Of course, there is no neat line between the canonical and the social-historical value of Lennon’s 1963 Gretsch 6120, but when compared with other guitars in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s collection, it becomes evident that individual items can be positioned and re-positioned along a continuum.

For instance, rockabilly pioneer Wanda Jackson’s 1958 Martin D-18 acoustic guitar and the 1942 Les Paul electric guitar called ‘The Clunker’ (customized from a pre-existing Epiphone and used for performance and as a prototype for production at the Gibson Guitar Company) each represent different dimensions of the story of rock 'n' roll: different from one another and from the dimension of the story represented by Lennon’s Gretsch.
Furthermore, each speaks to this history in a different manner. Unlike the iconic instruments of other prominent figures associated with the canonical narrative (such as Eric Clapton or Kurt Cobain), Les Paul’s electric guitar prototype functions more like a conventional archeological artefact that illustrates a transformative event within a narrative of technological development. Wanda Jackson’s guitar, the value of which might have been overlooked in the earlier years of the museum’s existence, provides evidence of an important contribution to the early history of rock 'n' roll by a female artist. The guitar possesses a collective symbolic meaning in terms of the presence of women in the historical narrative, while simultaneously helping secure Jackson’s visibility as a rock pioneer. In the context of the temporary exhibition Women Who Rock, its display primarily supports the exhibition’s overarching social-political narrative. Thus, although the collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is strongly magnetized by an object’s capacity to confirm the canonical narrative upon which the museum is based, it is nevertheless possible to see how the interplay between this and the social-historical narrative jointly constitute the framework or field of value for the museum (Fig. 4.8).

In addition to serving a particular narrative, each object has a certain rhetorical function. As the interview with James Henke reveals, thinking about this is built into the process of collecting and is guided by needs and expectations about how particular ‘objects lend credibility to the narrative’, whether illustrating a story, operating in iconic fashion, or providing evidence of events or in support of particular claims (Henke 2011). By replacing masterpiece and artefact with canonical and social-historical, the value plot more accurately expresses the kind of value contained within and expressed by the collection of the popular music museum.

Furthermore, there are also those sorts of things that both Henke and Leonard point out are collected because they have a ‘contextual relationship with a musician or music

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10 Jackson was active as a musician for almost five decades before her 2003 recording with The Cramps and Elvis Costello restored her public visibility.
scene and which might not otherwise have a popular music association’ (Leonard 2007) but cannot be said to reside below the threshold of value in the realm of the spurious. Items such as Jimi Hendrix’s grade-school drawings or Jim Morrison’s boyhood scout shirt (Fig. 4.9) suggest that certain objects, although valued because of their association with the artist, derive their power from the biographical narrative rather than the canonical. Like his colleague Lauren Onkey (Vice President of Education), Henke cites the Hendrix drawings as personal favourites that are also frequently mentioned by visitors as significant to their experience of the museum. He also identifies them with a curatorial strategy: ‘I feel like it [the museum] has to be about more than just the person’s career. For instance, you see in the [Doors] exhibit that Jim Morrison was a swimmer, a boy scout, and a good student’ (Henke 2011).

Figure 4.9 Morrison’s Cub Scout shirt (right) in Doors exhibit. Photograph by Sam Howitz.

Bob Marley’s dread is another sort of biographical object. While Marley (as an inductee) could be considered part of the canonical narrative represented by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, this object is not one that obviously fits into the museum’s established display
rhetoric, and in fact has not yet been put on display. This is, in part, because of its distance from mass-produced popular culture, but perhaps also because of its unsettling status as an artefact that was once part of that person’s body. Nevertheless, the ambivalence or uncertainty does not consistently limit the exhibition of remains-related items, as the inclusion of John Lennon’s blood-soaked clothes in the museum’s 2009 exhibition at its Annex in New York City demonstrated.

Such objects highlight the importance of interpretation within the process of establishing an object’s museum value. In contrast to many of the objects in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s collection, which were acquired purposefully with exhibition in mind, this particular object was an unsolicited donation by a family member. Thus, it enters into the collection without a clearly understood display function, and how it will tell the story of Bob Marley remains undetermined. Its contextual relationship with the musician makes it significant—it is not spurious in the sense of being irrelevant or un-genuine—but its value is not fully evident. It is similar in this respect to a piece of hate mail addressed to the Rolling Stones that also belongs to the collection. The letter provides something of a counter-narrative to the canonical version of universal acclaim for ‘the world’s greatest rock and roll band’ but interpretation has yet to direct its potential and secure this significance. Unlike the bag of Lennon’s clothes that served as evidence and made a rhetorical point about the abrupt end of an extraordinarily creative life, the meaning and value of Marley’s dread and the Rolling Stones’ hate mail remain latent, and perhaps even obscure. What this suggests is that, although the canonical narrative is a primary driver of the collecting practices of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the popular music museum’s collection value plot is not organised along its vertical axis by the opposition between the authentic and spurious (fake or rubbish). Rather, it supposes a field of value in which museum value is mediated by its iconic, illustrative, revelatory, or latent display value.

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11 The status of these objects is ambiguous as hair and blood are not central to any federal laws or museum policies pertaining to non-Native human remains.
The items in the collection that serve the biographical narrative of the artist include not only those which speak to their life outside of music but certain unique items originating with the artist that are neither fully private nor fully public. For instance, Jimi Hendrix’s handwritten lyrics for ‘Purple Haze’ and Bruce Springsteen’s notebooks are liminal objects that are personal yet part of the process of creation for a commercial industry (Fig. 4.10). As such, they have the power to reveal aspects of the process of creation that may not be widely known or understood, particularly when the industry is successful in directing attention exclusively to popular music products and obscuring its processes.

By using the biographical materials in its collection, the popular music museum could play a unique role in revealing the process of making music, the evolution of careers, and the creation of celebrity. However, for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this might be at odds with its industry-supported mission of celebrating individual artistry and a canonical narrative.
What the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s collection demonstrates about the way in which value is formulated within the popular music museum is that an item’s status as mass-produced has little bearing on its value. Because what its value actually depends upon is the provenance of the specific object, its relevance within a canonical, biographical, or social-political narrative, and its potential for exhibition. This is no less true for the many mass-produced objects in the museum’s collection: a Zenith radio, a worn mid-century modern couch, a black leather motorcycle jacket, or pair of Adidas sneakers. Each object plays a role in events or situations of significance to the history of popular music, yet none was manufactured specifically with such a purpose or potential in mind. From a more conventional perspective of museum value, such as Clifford’s, the coincidental character of their value would likely render them spurious. Yet as part of the collection of the popular music museum, such objects can possess a rich semiotic density through which their authenticity is established.

![Darryl McDaniels’ Adidas sneakers in Run-D.M.C. exhibit. Photograph by Sam Horwitz.](image)

Darryl McDaniels’ Adidas Superstar sneakers (circa 1985) provide an interesting example. Exhibited at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s first hip-hop exhibition, *Roots, Rhymes + Rage* (1999), the sneakers of the founding member of Run-D.M.C.
were prominently displayed and remain part of the museum’s permanent collection. They offer an apt example of the operation of multiple frameworks in the popular music museum’s determination of authenticity. A mass-produced item, the shelltoe sneakers on display in the museum are no different than those ‘available anywhere’ in any ordinary shoe store. As a result, there is an overlap between the museum’s artefacts and the visitor’s everyday material world. The illustrative value of the object within the context of the exhibition resides in its capacity to exemplify one of the central points of reference for the vocabulary of hip-hop style. It also serves to evoke the group’s 1986 hit song ‘My Adidas’ and in this sense might be thought of as iconic.\textsuperscript{12} The group’s \textit{King of Rock} video, in which they enter, unwelcome, into a mythic Museum of Rock and Roll, might also be recalled, adding another layer of inter-textual meaning. In addition, the sneakers play a generative role in the collaborative creation of a thirty-fifth-anniversary limited run design by the manufacturer and the group.

Considering the Adidas sneakers in reference to more conventional criteria, there is little about intrinsic materiality that would seem to recommend them as a museum piece. They are not unique, in the sense of being either rare or customized, but rather generic items elevated through their association with a noteworthy person and group. In addition to their symbolic functions, they operate charismatically in accordance with a personal connection that ‘rarefies’ them. Their use or ownership by an actual protagonist of history allows a transfer of aura from that person to thing. Such contagious value-by-association is a very potent force within popular music culture, one that the museum cannot afford to dismiss or ignore. Henke recounts an incident that testifies to the significance of the sense of personal connection with the charismatic artefact:

\begin{quote}
There was a minister in Cleveland who came to me and told me these stories about how he met his wife to a Bruce Springsteen song and how important Springsteen was in his life. He was a huge fan. And he wanted
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Such designs, which have been referred to as ‘heritage commodities’, are an interesting phenomenon that lies outside the parameters of this thesis.
to see a famous Esquire guitar of Bruce’s up close so he asked if he could come and look at it when the exhibition was coming down. And so we let him put on gloves and hold the guitar. You could really see the impact it had for him and I know it was one of the highlights of his life (Henke 2011).

Henke’s anecdote illustrates how the ‘reality’ of the experience orbits and encompasses the material existence, energized by its aura. What registers as real or authentic is a complex matter that requires the material artefact but remains irreducible to it. As Hilde Hein states:

The acclaim awarded to ‘real things’ and the special protection that museums give to them are functions of several conceptual orders that come together in the assignment of value. Although in agreement that what they declare to be real is good, their different systems arrive at that assessment by altogether different routes. (Hein 2000, 75)

The value resulting from use, ownership, or physical contact, like the functional display value of the object as icon, illustration, evidence, or enigma, depends upon the supporting narratives that frame the field and apply dynamically. Value is not predetermined according to ‘type’—mass-produced, custom, singular, or unique—for the potential attends each object in varying degrees. Object type may be constraining but it does not provide the boundary condition of authenticity.

As Henke’s anecdote illustrates, the value framework that informs the public’s encounter with the collection of the popular music museum recognises not only what the object brings to the encounter but what the audience brings as well. The popular music museum’s audience encounters the historical value of popular music’s material culture they find at the museum, but also add to it through their own personal attachments, enthusiasms, and knowledge. Thus the field of value is not only infused with the animating magnetism of the artist’s biography but is also open to the projection of personal meaning and
memory by the audience. And yet, while the role played by personal meaning, memory, and knowledge is acknowledged by the curator as integral to the field of value within which the museum collects and exhibits, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame frequently faces criticisms about its version of the history of popular music which is told in a manner that leaves the fans for the most part anonymous and invisible. Thus, our final revision of the value plot (Fig. 4.12) identifies the fourth quadrant with the personal narrative. After completing the analysis of the material culture of popular music, the discussion will return to examine the deeper significance of personal meaning (and, more generally, intangible heritage) to see how they challenge certain conventions of the museum.

Of course it could be suggested that this particular diagram of the field of value of popular music’s material culture provides just one possible perspective of the topic. And certainly this is true. Marion Leonard, for instance, has provided a fairly exhaustive inventory of the popular music material culture collected by museums. She identifies six
categories of items, sorted according to their relation to various zones of the world of popular music:

The first of these is music related material manufactured for general commercial sale (records, posters, merchandise, etc.); secondly, manufactured material which was originally available only to a select group (such as fan club releases, material sent to retailers and promo material sent to journalists and DJs); thirdly, material produced within a music culture (by fans, promoters, artists, enthusiasts, etc.) or by a musician (lyric sheets, set lists, demos, etc.) which was not sold commercially in its original form; the fourth category is material which has a transitory exchange or promotional purpose such as concert tickets or billboard posters; the fifth category is clothing worn by musicians (including stage costume) or by others which might typify the style of an era, music movement or following; and the final category is that of material which has a contextual relationship with a musician or music scene and which might not otherwise have a popular music association (Leonard 2007, 151).

An obvious strength of Leonard’s typology is that it recognizes that the museum has absorbed the categories at play within the commercial and fan cultures of popular music—first through private collecting in the secondary market and subsequently through the collecting done by public institutions (Leonard 2007, 151). Its recognition of the museum’s cultural ecosystem informs this analysis and has been transposed to its horizontal axis where the artistic creation and audience consumption are seen to flank industry mediation. These can be viewed as either zones of activity or parts of a sequence of activities, demonstrating one of the benefits of using a field of value diagram: its capacity to directly express value in relational terms.

Another strength of the value plot is that it suggests the potential for the relocation of the objects, thus lending visibility to the consumer object’s characteristic mobility—a
property acknowledged by Appadurai, Thompson, and Baudrillard in their work on value in consumer society. Kevin Moore’s foundational analysis looks at how personalisation turns authentic artefacts into ‘spurious masterpieces’ but notes that items can travel in either direction, increasing or decreasing their value. ‘[A]ll kinds of further movements through changes in value are at least theoretically possible’, concludes Moore (1997, 73). Such movement is visible within the collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, especially as popular knowledge abates or fashions change, as is seen in the instance of Wanda Jackson’s guitar; or can be anticipated as technologies and tastes change, such as will surely occur in the coming years when Skrillex’s laptop becomes an object of interpretation.

Aligning the museum with music culture

One of the ways in which the popular music museum establishes the value of the mass-produced materials that constitute much of its collection is by matching the categories of evaluation used in the surrounding music cultures. Especially important in this regard are the notions of value that have evolved within the record and memorabilia collecting cultures and markets where collectors have acted as agents of preservation and communities of collectors have established a shared understanding of what is significant and valuable.

The value the museum sees in the materials of popular music are anticipated by those early collectors who act as agents of preservation and whose collecting practices have helped identify and articulate objects of value and collecting categories (Leonard 2007; Shuker 2010). By securing a ‘removal from the mundane’ (Carman 2010, 74) and an economic evaluation, the collecting community paves the way for the museum’s further elevation of the object as a shared cultural good, as is frequently the case with famous guitars that have been put to auction—the Jimi Hendrix exhibit’s 1967 Gibson Flying V dubbed ‘Love Drops’ being one such example. Such items acquire value in stages: as objects of personal (fan) interest, then as objects of collective cultural significance, and,
increasingly, as financial investments. Often the collectibles market provides a context where sentimental or souvenir value becomes economic and symbolic. Thus, the market can sometimes serve as a first stage of public life for the object.

In other instances the items acquired by the museum have bypassed the market, even though they might possess significant potential for sale in the world of private collections. Two examples from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame would be Ringo Starr’s Ludwig drums and the sheets of Janis Joplin blotter acid designed by cartoonist Robert Crumb. Still other items owned by the museum—for instance, the bag of hundreds of hotel keys collected by Eagles bassist Timothy B. Schmit (Fig. 4.13)—raise questions about the potential of its value to transit from the museum to the adjacent world of private collecting, thus highlighting the way in which the museum not only recognises but creates value as well. And this is sometime that the museum staff recognises helps expedite certain loans. In discussing the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s relationship to collectors, Henke notes:

When I first started here [at the museum] the older artists never kept anything because they didn’t realize the value of it. We and other music
museums probably had a big impact on that and so now, more and more, they are seeing the value of this stuff and hanging on to it.

And, in fact, Henke notes that a growing number of artists are amassing collections of materials related to their careers, and sometimes even hiring curators to manage them. He mentions Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen, and Larry Mullin of U2, who purchased the house beside his own in Dublin in order to store his collection.

While the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame distances itself in practical terms from the collectibles market through its ‘no purchase policy’, it nevertheless indirectly absorbs and influences the evolution of the economic value of what is collected. It both plays a role in propelling objects through the various stages of increased value and can act as a way station in that transit. (The Gretsch 6120 that once belonged to Lennon, and then for several decades to his cousin, and which is now in the collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, in fact, remains the legal property of sports team owner Jim Irsay, who purchased it in 2015.) The popular music museum’s role in the collectibles market and the market’s influence on the museum is a complicated relation that can vary dramatically from situation to situation. What is apparent, however, is that there is influence as a result of their adjacency and points of intersection.

Of the ways in which the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame resembles the individual collector, one of the most significant to its public credibility and value is their common reliance on the ‘rock canon’ to guide their collecting practices. This is a topic on which popular music studies provides us with valuable research on how canonical status informs the experience of quality and imperfection (O’Keeffe 2013) and guides the individual’s sense of identity in relation to personal collections (Wyn Jones 2008), and how the influence of music journalism has been significant in shaping the processes of canon formation (Von Appen and Doehring 2006; Karja 2006; Shuker 2010). In the most detailed study of the relation of individual record collectors to the canon, Roy Shuker notes the influence of the music press, which for several decades played a crucial role in
the provision of the cultural analysis upon which value might rest. However, he is also quick to note that ‘collectors are not simple recipients’ of canonical values but ‘also play an important role in canon creation through their vernacular scholarship and involvement in (re-)releasing select recordings’ (Shuker 2010, 90). Similarly, the popular music museum’s relation to the ‘canon’ is also one involving both reception and creation. For the museum, reliance on an abstraction like the ‘rock canon’ can have serious consequences as it invites a conversation about greatness and who defines that greatness. As a public institution, especially one that seeks to align itself with the popular culture it represents, the museum faces exacting expectations about how its collective history is represented, as will be discussed in more detail in the later sections of this chapter.

Thus, there exists a shared conceptual infrastructure that connects the museum to the surrounding collecting cultures and provides an important point of reference for determining the value of the mass-produced materials that are collected. However, while the popular music museum sanctions the values embedded in the collecting communities that have played a generative role in establishing the heritage value of its material culture, its own institutional character nevertheless comes to play a powerful role in stabilising these values and making them appear as if they are presented as universal. This is particularly apparent with regard to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s relationship to the notion of the ‘rock canon’. Nevertheless, the categories at play in the field of practice help the museum distinguish between the incidental and the essential as the museum brings those objects into an institutional context where they will be subject to further abstraction and rationalisation. So rather than the museum representing an entirely separate sphere where culture is subject to processes which are foreign to it, we can see how the culture generates many of the categories which the museum then formalises.

On the other hand, as the museum brings the ‘private system of exchange into the public sphere’ (Henning 2006, 29) it relocates both materials and associated conceptual frameworks within a new context. Because the museum context is informed by the
institution’s characteristic capacity to provide meta-level reflection on the cultures it represents, those aspects of the culture mirrored or absorbed by the museum are amplified. By embracing multiple—sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing—facets of the living culture, its collecting processes transform not only the objects it collects but also their associated value. Whereas the museum seeks to create resonance, it is sometimes, instead, seen as compromising and even destroying the value of the living culture.

*Employing professional systems and standards*

The popular music museum establishes the authenticity of mass-produced objects by ignoring the distinction between high and low culture and recognising the relational character of its value. It confirms the authenticity of its mass-produced objects by recognising its relation to the surrounding collecting cultures (their standards of value and their cultural resources) as one of mutual influence. It also reinforces the authenticity of its collection by employing the well-developed and systematic professional practices used within the broader museum sector. Considered together, these points of overlap provide the popular music museum with the means to assemble a ‘bigger picture’ in reference to which the value of the items it collects appears legible and legitimate.

The museum’s catalogue record stores a range of information about each artefact, including physical dimensions, construction, medium, provenance, acquisition information, valuation, and rights management information. At the level of the catalogue record, the museum is agnostic when it comes to the question of mass-produced, commercial culture. Within the information system of the museum, the mass-produced object is subject to the procedures of artefact analysis, a process that not only collects its history and records the details of its specific form, but also provides the basis for comparison with other objects within the system. That the mass-produced object is provided an abstract equivalence with other objects can be understood as an elevation of its status but this is just one dimension of the significance of its being collected. Another important result of the object undergoing artefact analysis is that it becomes particularised. The
specifics of its construction, distribution, dimensions, origin and relocation, ownership, use, etc. are attached to it via the collection record. A convincing advocate for the importance of artefact analysis, Moore claims that the model devised by Pearce for analysis ‘provides a structure whereby all facets of a piece of material culture can be explored in detail, to provide the fullest range of “associated information”, so that an object is not simply a curio’ (Moore 1997, 57). Moore goes on to discuss what was at the time of writing a relatively new interest in popularising ‘object knowledge’ by ‘enabling the public to undertake aspects of artefact analysis themselves in displays’ (Ibid., 58).

In the two decades since Moore’s text was written and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame first opened to the public, the cultural landscape surrounding the museum has been radically transformed into one where popular antiques reality television programmes focus on material culture and online information (from information institutions, on eBay, and through social networks) allows ordinary people to create detailed investigations of the history, construction, distribution, and significance of a range of objects from recognised masterpieces to personal souvenirs. The impact of a burgeoning ‘object knowledge’ within the culture at large is an issue that will be discussed in more detail in another Chapter 6, but it is worth noting again that this kind of knowledge has long resided with or been developed by individual collections. In fact, without the precedent of the individual collector, it is hard to imagine the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the popular music museum. The souvenir and fetishistic forms of collecting identified by Pearce in her collecting typology serve as precursors to systematic collecting.

Higher-level categories of evaluation such as Leonard’s aesthetic, canonical, and social-political, or those employed in the popular music material culture value plot, work in tandem with classificatory schemes and systems embedded in the museum’s catalogue. Although the precise manner in which they operate as mutually constitutive remains

13 One list includes forty-five such shows in existence or in development, two of which focus specifically on museums. http://www.antiquetrader.com/antiques/complete-list-of-antiques-reality-tv-shows
unclear, what is evident is that the practical aspects of the museum’s systematic collecting process (registration, cataloguing, and artefact analysis) attaches information to objects in a manner that informs its cultural location. The effects are twofold: on the one hand, the objects establish their existence in relation to other objects within the collection; on the other hand, by employing the well-developed and systematic professional practices used within the broader museum sector, the museum connect the object with a wider network of culturally significant things. For the popular music museum these systems are used in a manner that is agnostic with regard to the object’s origins in mass production or craft, as vernacular or unique. Thus, they reinforce the equivalence already made visible within the museum’s acquisitions and display of the material culture of popular music.

The information infrastructure of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame comprises the collections management software product called The Museum System (TMS) for the artefact and the three systems used by the Library and Archives: Hydrangea, Millennium and the Archivist Toolkit. As Librarian Andy Leach points out in interview, the integration of the three systems allows the library to deal with specific demands of their considerable holdings of audio and video recordings, periodicals, books, and archival materials from artists, music journalists, and record companies. The system used for the museum artefacts, TMS, is used throughout the museum sector because of its efficiency and ease of use (Leach 2011).

It is interesting that by using TMS collection management software, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame comes to share certain structures of information and workflows with approximately 800 other museums, each with its own area of specialisation, distinct history and characteristic curatorial challenge. While the decision to use commercially produced collections management software might be driven by an interest in efficiency and simplicity, the harmonised vocabularies, nomenclature, and registration routines mean the sector develops a shared information culture (Callery 2004, 2). The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, although a museum of an ‘art form that is everywhere’, by employing
the tools of the conventional museum sets the objects of that art form on a shared stage with those of The Henry Moore Foundation, the San Francisco MoMA, The Royal Ontario Museum, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. What might appear on the surface as a simple practical matter is, in fact, also a matter of conceptual alignment. Thus the process of cataloguing effortlessly moves the mass-produced everyday objects of popular music into the realm of ‘structured knowledge’ (Parry 2007, 33), and places it on the horizon of the ‘distinctive forms and levels of attention’ specific to the museum (Macdonald 2011).

The systematic aspect of the popular music museum’s collecting practice is also important in terms of how it authenticates the objects in its collection. Undertaking artefact analysis or cataloguing according to standard methodologies (such as the CIDOC conceptual Reference Model, the Social History and Industrial Classification (SHIC) nomenclature, and the Dublin Core or DOCAM initiative) is crucial to public trust. In some instances authentication can be relatively easy, as in the case of McDaniels’s Adidas, Joey Ramone’s black leather jacket, or Stevie Wonder’s harmonica. In other instances, objects of popular music history can require more detailed detective work in order to authenticate claims being made on their behalf.¹⁴ The work of authentication remains largely invisible to the public, operating something like the source code of a software application, but despite the public’s awareness, the processes of verifying provenance confirm unspoken expectations that the museum will provide for and guarantee the authenticity of the objects it collects (Parry 2007; Caron and Brown 2011).

Thus, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame can be seen to have established the value of mass-produced material culture by rejecting the high-low division which treats the realm of the popular as a generalised cultural location devoid of authenticity; aligning

¹⁴ One example of the process being documented is seen in PBS’s History Detectives (Season 10, Episode 2), in which the Ampeg bass amp reputed to have belonged to the legendary Motown bass player James Jamerson is the object of inquiry.
itself with existing collecting cultures that have already evolved processes of evaluation; subjecting objects to a process of analysis that particularises and renders them artefacts; and employing professional systems and standards that allow comparisons and equivalences between objects, between collections, and between institutions within the sector. However, another crucial question remains regarding the way the popular music museum establishes its authenticity and how that pertains to the value of the personal figures within its collection. For it is this aspect of value upon which the popular music museum’s ability to engage the social imaginary happens to be contingent.

The material culture of popular music offers ‘an avenue through which to explore personal and social histories, memory, affect and identity’ (Leonard 2007, 149). To establish the authenticity of the objects it collects, the museum must engage this personal meaning and memory and animate affective relations. In order to clarify how the popular music museum integrates the personal into its value framework, it is helpful to introduce the terms ‘aura’ and ‘affect’ which can be used to supplement and extend our understanding of the emotional facets of the object and highlight the role of the intangible in popular music cultural heritage.

**Authenticity as an encounter of material with imagination**

The authenticity of the materials of popular culture can only be partially explained in reference to their institutional context or their materiality. Their cultural authenticity is equally important and brings into play several dimensions of experience that involve imagination—recollection, enthusiasm, and other emotions. Sandra Dudley ‘addresses the material object, essentially to allow a focus on the sensory and emotional aspects of encounter’, but in situations where the object is ‘tangible, measurable, visible, and limited’ (Dudley 2012, 5). She points out that two people experiencing the material qualities of an object’s ‘bigness, blueness, roundness, smoothness and so on’ will have subjective and contingent experiences but ‘part at least of their engagement with the object will be determined by its material characteristics’ (*Ibid.*, 7).
Taking Jimi Hendrix’s 12-string Zemaitis acoustic guitar as an example, we can consider how the material characteristics determine engagement. There is, of course, a fundamental level of recognition of its presence and identification of what it is. It is possible to see, upon scrutiny, that the maker has used several kinds of wood—mahogany, spruce, and ebony—as is often the case with acoustic guitars. The letter ‘Z’ logo on the headstock identifies it with the instrument’s maker, Tony Zemaitis. But the power of the instrument is not determined by the materials from which it is made, nor from the cultural meaning of its manufacture. Rather, it rests on its storied past, its identity as Hendrix’s guitar, and, more particularly, its filmed use by Hendrix, who is recorded talking about how the filming has frightened him. The experience of this material object is inextricably linked to its history and the acts of imagination and memory that the audience enacts in relation to it.

No longer a ‘sanctuary of material things’, the museum nevertheless remains an institution in which the public places its trust and which it expects to guarantee the veracity of the object, whether material, e-tangible or something in between (Parry 2007). Ross Parry’s discussion of the ‘recalibration of authenticity’ necessitated by the advent of the
digital age traces the changing relation of the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’ across several decades from competition to complement, from instrument to experience. It points out that authenticity, although irreducible to authentication, operates in conjunction with it.

Aura and affect: the imaginary relations of the collection.
According to both Henke and Onkey, it is difficult to anticipate what visitors will find emotionally powerful, but certain artefacts do possess a certain star power: Hendrix’s handwritten lyrics for ‘Purple Haze’; the items in the Doors display case relating to Jim Morrison’s childhood and family; Janis Joplin’s 1965 psychedelic Porsche (Henke 2011; Onkey 2011). The day following Michael Jackson’s death, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame devised an impromptu memorial at which the singer’s white sequin glove drew a collective gasp from the people present when it was revealed. Other artefacts such as the Run-D.M.C. sneakers, Pink Floyd’s stage props for the Wall tour, Duane Allman’s 1959 Gibson Les Paul, and Lady Gaga’s meat dress also merit mention as favourites.

Each of these artefacts is the nexus of a several overlapping relations of meaning. Similarly, the range and intensity of responses to the object’s valence varies widely. Although the audience responses have not been subject to research (Henke 2011), there exists an overarching expectation that feelings of awe, excitement, and profundity are integral to the value of many objects within the museum’s collection. As part of the intangible heritage of popular music, these acts of imagination play an important role in the value of the museum’s collection both in terms of what the museum collects and presents to its audience, and in terms of what the audience brings to the encounter. While the power of the objects belonging to the museum to engage the imagination is a form of ‘aura’, the audience’s association of the object with the self is best described as ‘affect’.

The perceived aura of the object rests on not only its ability to recall or evoke something of significance but also its ability to envelop the visitor or viewer. The handwritten lyrics to Hendrix’s ‘Purple Haze’ (Fig. 4.4) show the left-handed guitarist’s distinct
cursive style. A graphologist might find telling the pattern of upper and lower zone emphasis or the irregular rhythm created by the word spacing, but for the average person what stands out is the difference between these lyrics and the later, more familiar ones of the recorded version. The religious reference of the original title of ‘Purple Haze’, ‘Jesus Saves’, along with mention of the ‘unborn’ and ‘1,000 crosses’ all disappear as the song evolves into a paean to romantic or sexual enchantment. Essentially a piece of ephemera, this single sheet of paper exercises an intangible power in its ability to reveal something personal and particular about an undeniably talented and category-blasting artist and his artistic process. Its value for storytelling is obvious but the information it offers does not have the arresting quality of the object. Even though the ‘Purple Haze’ lyric sheet operates in a manner easily observed from within the traditional museum framework (it is original, singular and rare), it also attracts attention and engages the visitor through its special intangible quality. Its aura—a subtly sensory and emotionally stimulating quality that gives rise to a distinctive atmosphere enveloping both object and subject—creates a connection between the person, the event or site of historical significance from which it derives, and the (embodied, present tense) person who beholds it (Latham 2007; Jones 2010).

The transfer of the intangible power of the object has to be described in several ways: as numinous experience, ‘a deeply connective, transcendental encounter one may have with a museum object, site, or exhibit’ (Latham 2007, 247); as allure, ‘the human-nonhuman fields of captivation’ (Thrift 2008, 9); or as fetish, ‘a magical object of extraordinary empowerment and influence (Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011, 278). ‘Aura’ is an excellent term for pulling together these strands of thinking because it operates at a level of generalisation that sheds the trappings of ethnographic condescension (where fetish is often aligned with archaic or ‘primitive’ thought) and avoids confusing and inaccurate comparisons of consumer activities (including fandom) with religion.15 It is also useful

15 See Mark Duffett’s thorough critique of the confusion of these two distinct abstract categories of collective experience and class in Understanding Fandom (2013)
because of its association with Benjamin’s *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in which the term ‘aura’ is used to discuss the development of new media technologies, their social effects, and the correlation of history and aesthetics. Thus, it keeps the question of the importance of media in view even as we discuss the material artefacts of the collection.

In their research on guitars as fetish objects, Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) employ three key terms to explain how the significance of specific guitars is transferred from object to person within the community of collectors and musicians who use them not only to make music, but also to enhance their own sense of self: concretization, conflation, and contagion. The first two describe the relation of subject to object. ‘Concretization’ involves representing an abstract concept in material form; for instance, originality by Wanda Jackson’s guitar, genius by the ‘Purple Haze’ lyric sheet (Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011, 280). ‘Conflation involves merging the concrete signifying object with the abstract idea it signifies.’ *(Ibid.,* 280) For example, the electric guitar might be viewed as the essence of rock 'n' roll, or, again, the ‘Purple Haze’ lyric sheet as an embodiment of the personal essence of Hendrix. The third term, ‘contagion’—‘the perception that qualities of one entity have been transferred to another, due to perceptions that actual physical contact between two entities has occurred’ *(Ibid.,* 281)—describes how both subject and object are situated within a broader historical context and signals the importance of some shared appreciation of the significance of the events that constitute that history. The mechanisms for the transfer of the intangible power of the object engage the subject personally but within limits. However, what their research also makes evident is that these limits are context specific.

When guitar collectors periodically move beyond the context of private possession into the public domain, a ‘dialectical tension between realism and success’ emerges. Playing or displaying the guitar in public subjects it to the critical scrutiny of other collectors and connoisseurs. The owner’s emotional investment in the fetish-object ceases to be
self-sustaining and becomes vulnerable to collective evaluations that might question its value or authenticity. (And thus destroy its aura.) However, it also stands to gain when it joins up with ‘collectively constructed imaginary empowerments’ (*Ibid.*, 280)

Moving the performance from a private to a public domain increases the realism of the fantasy but simultaneously increases the uncertainty of a positive outcome (Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011, 290).

As we have seen in the previous section, this process of suspension and intensification occurs in two stages: when the object is first collected; and then again as it enters into the realm of the public museum. Each change in context exercises significant influence on the value of the object and its capacity to manifest the aura. As a result, the replica Gibson Les Paul ‘Goldie’ that thrills the private collector and impresses his collecting community must represent more than beautiful crafting, and must evoke more than iconic connection with music history, in order to activate aura within the context of the museum. Even an original ’57 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop would be an unlikely acquisition for the museum, unless perhaps it had once belonged to Duane Allman. In order to warrant a place in the collection, the guitar must be able to command the attention of museum visitors, to evoke significance and envelop them within its aura by connecting them (through a relation of ‘contagion’) with an actual person, place, or event of collectively recognised significance. Consequently, while the popular music museum welcomes the imaginary relations at play in the object’s aura, it is only if the claims of connection can be verified and authenticated. As the object moves from the private to public realm it must prove to be indexical and not merely iconic.

Fernandez and Lastovicka’s research also notes that the strength of aura is contingent upon the accumulated knowledge and experience of the subject (286). That the individual’s personal investment modifies the power of the object offers further evidence of its relational quality. The emotional or visceral response awakened by the object arises
from its association with ‘something in the past, or in the imagination or both, that carries emotional weight with the viewer’ (Latham 2007; Maines and Glynn 1993, 250). What one knows and what one imagines about Chuck Berry’s guitar or Skrillex’s laptop will shape the encounter. In fact, in the absence of subjective or social preparation, the aura will almost certainly fail to manifest.

What becomes apparent is that the aura is not a property of the object but an object relation. It involves an engagement that is both psychological and social. It is realised through a transaction that depends on but cannot be reduced to the object’s materiality. Its reality is suffused with imagination but constrained by certain institutional standards as well as a shared understanding of history. The ‘aura’ of the object is the conduit through which the audience member connects with a broader network of significance. Within the context of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame the aura is important because it brings the person who is enveloped by it into immediate and compelling contact with the larger over-arching history of rock ‘n’ roll.

If the aura can be characterised as involving acts of imagination that idealise, then perhaps affect can be characterised by acts of identification that familiarise. Whereas the aura brings the person into contact with a powerful, shared story, affect associates the individual’s experience with that story. The woman who spontaneously does the dance moves associated with a song she hears in the museum; the teenager who laughs in recognition when he sees the same hairstyles his parents wore in their graduation photos in a music video; the person who points at an artefact and says: ‘I was there’ or ‘I had one of those’—these situations all involve affect and in each case its expression suggests an adjustment of the provision of the museum in light of popular music’s deep, one might even say constitutive, relationship with the personal.16

16 Deleuze in his use of the term ‘affect’ insists on its pre-personal character and thus Deleuzians would take issue with this summary. However, it seems to me that something integral to fashioning collectivity gets jettisoned in Deleuze’s anti-humanist proposals.
Our use of the term ‘affect’ is guided by the more commonplace psychological use of the term to denote the experience of emotions and feelings as well as by a more elaborate and nuanced use of the term cultivated within affect theory. Here, affect is directly tied to the body and ‘emerges out of muddy, unmediated relatedness’ (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 4). It favours movement and non-linear ‘structures of feeling’ that appear and then disappear in the moments that constitute everyday life, and emotions that are experienced more as sensation rather than ideas that have been distilled within discourse (Ahmad 2010). Affect also creates alliances and affinities that feed into social identifications and connect individuals in groups and with cultural forms such as genres, formats, or styles (Born 2011, 284).

The value of affect for the popular music museum can be seen in the way it enables engagement and participation but also in the way it helps to gather what might otherwise remain a ‘hidden history’. By helping the museum align itself more perfectly with the culture it collects, affect is also important in terms of ensuring the museum is responding to a living culture appropriately: by reflecting its complexity, maintaining space for new growth, and protecting its history against the ‘archival topos’ within which the museum is ‘premised on the dream of being singular interiors for total collections’ (Hetherington 2014, 79).

4.4 Finding value in the personal

Given its affective resonance, popular music is often seen as a way to enable engagement and participation. In contexts where ‘widening participation and tackling social exclusion’ are an issue, popular music is seen as a tool to ‘assist museums in achieving greater social inclusion’ (Leonard 2010, 171). The assumptions underlying this approach are that popular music cuts across demographic boundaries given that the social worlds of popular music ‘cannot be reduced to any pre-given social ontology’ (Born 2000, 381); that the audience’s ‘prior vernacular cultural knowledge’ (Oehler and Hanley 2009)

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17 This is true not only in the museum world but also most obviously in education, marketing, and sports.
ensures that what they encounter in the museum will make sense even ‘without the institution’s strategy of intelligibility’ (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 14); and that popular music, something deeply influenced by personal attachments and local cultures and integrated within everyday life (DeNora 2000), will feel welcoming and bring with it positive emotions and associations. Although there is a certain truth to this snapshot of the relation of popular music culture to the museum, taking for granted that popular music content produces an automatic connection with a diverse and engaged audience is (as the demise of the National Music Centre and the British Music Experience demonstrated) not always a safe assumption. What is safe to assume, however, is that people come to the popular music museum with both experience of the subject and some sort of (often deep) personal connection to it. How is it then, that this experience and engagement might inform what is of value within the popular music museum’s collection?

Run-D.M.C.’s Adidas provide an example of how affect supports engagement and, at the same time, highlights the volatility of this sort of value. As an object of recent vintage, one that still lives close to use, there is a strong possibility that the audience member might identify the sneaker with their own experience: as a consumer of the product, member of the culture, owner of the song, or audience of its representation in the music video. Each of these identifications draws upon a personal recollection of an involvement that is anchored in everyday life. Therefore the museum might expect that it would possess an affective density that would lend its value. However, as a relatively new object with fully visible commodity origins, the sneaker’s value depends heavily upon the public’s trust in the institutional guarantee that this particular one has been ‘rarified’ charismatically by having belonged to, been handled by, been cared for, and valued by Darryl McDaniels.¹⁸ Further, within the context of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, its aura may seem weak compared to the ‘star object’ with a more canonic storied past. Or its significance might be dismissed because it belongs to a music culture that is seen as

¹⁸ That it not be a facsimile, playing only an illustrative role in an exhibition but without genuine or authentic indexical relation to the artist. But it is impossible to tell by appearance alone.
either lacking value or having not yet stood the test of time. Consequently, while affect promises personal engagement it brings with it the discussions and disputes that characterise popular music’s living culture. As a ‘place’ where value is stabilised and settles, the collection may be challenged by the need to accommodate the dynamism of affect.

In the examples of audience response mentioned above, we catch a glimpse of the structures of feeling that constitute popular music’s affect. In the case of the woman who dances, it is evident that the artefact (a song listened to on headphones) has given rise to her bodily response and thus belongs with it. In eliciting such a response, it demonstrates a power not conventionally associated with either the museum artefact or the museum environment. Thus, we can see affect introducing a new audience disposition. The dancer’s immersion in the song continues un-interrupted by museum staff while other visitors watch appreciatively. Yet it is evident that the environment is not designed for this: it is permitted rather than invited or intended. Affect is transmitted when she calls over her friend, who puts on another set of headphones and joins the dance, but the technology and context limit the potential for further contagion. This expression, this event, is part of popular music culture but because it exists as intangible heritage it is difficult to collect alongside the guitars, costumes, recording contracts, photos, and other materials that belong to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Similarly, the teenager’s recognition of the influence of a style derived from popular music on his own family experience represents an instance of the ‘dynamic interplay between history, culture and cognition’ that is simultaneously autobiographical and a part of social memory (Hewer and Roberts 2012), and equally difficult to collect. A recollection generated in relation to an artefact—‘I was there’ or ‘I had one of those’—lends itself much more readily to documentation. However, most documentary formats such as oral history tend to favour a narrative approach that results in a loss of the sense that affect is actually an assemblage of various sensations, emotions, environments, and thought fragments. The affective resonance of seeing a poster for a show one had attended—U2’s gigs at McGonagle’s in Dublin in 1979 for instance—remains difficult to convey by the usual method of the oral history interview.
In the context of popular music culture it is impossible to draw a clear line between forms of knowledge that accrue through participatory experience and those linked to more conventional approaches to learning based on instruction, information gathering, and reflection. In fact, most members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s audience identify themselves as experts when it comes to popular music. When asked to rank their knowledge in a visitor survey, ‘pretty much everyone ranked themselves a 9 or a 10’, reports Henke (2011). This suggests a correlation between affect and expertise similar to the constellation of gestures, practices, inhabitation, and bodily encounter at play in the production of musical ‘taste’ (Hennion 2003). Given popular music’s ubiquitousness and relatively low threshold for involvement, that much of the expertise surrounding popular music exists outside of institutional contexts (with ‘amateurs’) is hardly surprising. On the other hand, what is surprising is that the portion of popular music history that is intertwined with affect, enjoyment, habits of engagement, and cultivation—the history that happens on the side of the consumer or audience—can only be seen in the collection intermittently, in glimpses. Furthermore, that the museum’s engagement of affect is critical to its recognition of the value of the personal for the collection, and given that ‘music has no material essence but a plural and distributed materiality’ (Born 2011, 377), a more complete strategy might be anticipated.

Oral history is the most obvious means for the museum to use in order to collect intangible heritage, and it has been used in different ways in each popular music museum. Because of the way in which the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame has organised its library (consisting of published two-dimensional and AV materials), archive (unpublished two-dimension materials), and artefact collections (Karel 2011), the status of the oral history interview not only falls between established categories but also raises issues about the increasingly overlapping timeframes of ‘the documentary moment’ and ‘public memory’ (Caron and Brown 2011, 5). In contrast, Seattle’s Experience Music Project

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19 In 2014 it was disclosed that the museum had, in fact, been creating an oral history archive for several years but had chosen to undertake the project without making it public.
envisioned its oral history archive as part of its founding mission (Bruce 2006), and even describes it as ‘the backbone of the collection’ (McMurray 2011). Interviews are used for exhibition research, included within temporary exhibitions, and made accessible to the public in a media lounge on the main floor of the museum. Similarly, the British Music Experience recorded a number of oral history interviews as part of its initial collecting efforts and then included some of these in its permanent exhibition, embedding them within its custom-made interactive exhibits. Answers to the question of how the collection might integrate material with intangible heritage begin to emerge through such collecting experiments and extensions. And in the context of innovation, the identity of the artefact ceases to be essentially material and a blurring of boundaries occurs. While this introduces some challenges to the museum’s conventional collecting routines, it simultaneously promises a better reflection of the properties of the culture it represents.

As an institution embedded in a world shaped by mass media and consumer culture, the popular music museum is challenged to strike a balance between the collectively conceived and received objects possessing aura, and those affective objects which claim public space for ‘what were once regarded as private passions’ (Thrift 2008, 12). The rise of what Nigel Thrift calls ‘public intimacy’ results in ‘the creation of worlds of virtual self-difference’ in which the concerns of self are reinforced through their broader circulation (15). What this means for the museum of popular music is that, as a contemporary form of popular culture, inextricably involved in the resulting ‘proliferation of performative object-fictions’ (15), the museum is expected to represent the history of rock 'n' roll in a way that recognizes the central role of consumption and includes the audience’s involvement as part of that history. Consequently, we can see how the audience’s self-identification and its affective relations become important puzzle pieces in putting together a picture of popular music culture. In an earlier era, in which the consumer was faceless and mute, ‘public intimacy’ might have been viewed as a vicarious, ‘para-social’ involvement—with the real action residing on the main stage with the makers and merchants of popular music. But today this is no longer the case.
The authenticity of the popular music museum rests on its ability to match the qualities of its subject. While the formal process of authentication (especially the verification of provenance data) remains important for establishing and maintaining public trust, the question of authenticity extends beyond this to include a less concrete, more diffuse sense of ‘realness’ that emerges from within the ‘series of overlapping affective fields’ (Thrift 2008, 21) that define popular cultures. The contemporary audience ‘does not discriminate sharply between what is known and what is felt’ but rather seeks out experience it can ‘encompass empathically’ (Hein 2000, 79). Authentic objects provide ‘a means for people to negotiate their own authenticity through the depth of feeling they have and the range of connections they can demonstrate’ (Jones 194–7). As we have seen, the personal—a quality most evident in the imaginary relations of fandom—is one of the central terms of reference for the authenticity of the collection. The objects collected by the museum operate at the intersection of the institution’s interpretation and those of its audience. The museum’s ‘bidirectional mediations’ (Born 2012) of the social and subjective aspects of meaning and value are integral to the authentication and renewal of the value of the collection.

Additionally, the embrace of the personal ushers a measure of heterogeneity into the museum, connecting it with the ‘disordering outside’ that has traditionally been understood as tamed within the ‘singular interior’ of the archive or collection (Hetherington 2014, 79). The rapport established between the popular music museum and its surrounding culture serves to ensure its authenticity by connecting it with the emotional investments and imaginary relations of the audience. This rapport, which requires constant adjustment and accommodation, also reinforces the museum’s authenticity by implicitly acknowledging the ongoing historical processes through which popular music culture continues to evolve and by recognising that ‘culture can never be reduced to its artefact while being lived’ (Williams 1960, 343). It is precisely these issues of relevance and responsiveness that Moore turned to in the conclusion of Museums and Popular Culture where he recommends that museums ‘look in far more detail at the external forces in the
environment around them’ (1997, 153). He encourages museum practitioners to take a strategic analysis-based approach to thinking about visitors, collaborators, and funders in order to help the popular culture museum find its place within the heritage landscape and successfully fulfill its ethical responsibilities to expand democratic decision-making processes, increase fair representation of all sectors of society, and ‘reflect the needs and interests of those who pay for them through their taxes (Moore 1997, 85).

As we have seen, the authenticity produced by matching involves a series of relays between the psyche and the social. Political philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis’s ‘social imaginary’ is useful here for summarising the significance of how the value of the collection is secured by the popular music museum. It also provides conceptual resources that help introduce a discussion of the three ongoing, unresolved challenges that face the popular music museum: the problem of the ‘rock canon’, the paradox of pluralism, and the ‘other immateriality’ of sound and song.

4.5 Engaging the social imaginary

In *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Castoriadis offers a psychoanalytically informed, post-Marxist theory of how society fits together. The text also offers deep reflection on how society is constituted through technique, language, and institutions, but its central focus is on the role of ‘the social imaginary’ in connecting individuals to collectivities. For Castoriadis, the social imaginary is ‘something outside the self which codetermines the agent’s activity’. It arises from the interplay of psychic and social forces (Castoriadis 1987, 51); it connects with the unconscious but cannot be reduced to a projection of the individual’s unconscious (*Ibid.*,144). It is what is created within the (not always cordial) exchanges between a given society’s articulation of identity and the ‘singularity of the individuals’ creative imagination’ (*Ibid.*, 315).

Castoriadis understands the non-rational elements as playing a role in social cohesion and views fantasy and imagination as means for overcoming alienation, questioning the status quo and generating experiments in cultural expression that can give rise to new
social formations. Such acts of imagination are an important part of popular music’s ‘complex social mediations’ of identity and sociality which can become ‘crucibles of transformation of or experimentation with, prevailing social relations’ (Born 2011, 379). However, popular music culture remains ‘less tied to a homogeneous, coherent social solidarity’ and more linked to fantasies about spaces and moments of autonomy, the integration of aesthetics with everyday life, the possibility of ‘public intimacy’ and the generation of ‘images of new modes of being’ (Castoriadis 1987, 53). And the value of objects in the popular music museum’s collection therefore rests on their ability to operate as idealised forms that engage this social imaginary.

However, it is important to keep in mind that Castoriadis viewed ‘the social imaginary’ as historical, complex, and subject to change. He recognised that the social imaginary of each era, economic order, nation, media, and subculture is distinct. The challenge this represents for the museum becomes apparent when we review the role the ‘rock canon’ has played in anchoring the value of the collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. For it is here that we can clearly see the tension between engagement and disengagement.

Further, by examining the resistance to the institution’s embrace of pluralism we can see that Castoriadis’s ‘faith that the imaginary will be creative and autonomous’ does not play out across the entire spectrum of encounters between the popular music museum and its audience. The unruly and unpredictable qualities of the cultural realm sometimes prove unable to generate the kinds of ‘lasting shared norms of reciprocity and trust’ needed by a public institution such as a museum (Tucker 2005, 43).

Contradictions surrounding the canon

The collection of the popular music museum embraces the mass-produced and recognizes aura and affect as critical to the object’s ability to engage the social imaginary. However, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s reliance on the ‘rock canon’ to provide a visible framework for its identity as a collecting (and exhibiting) heritage institution makes evident the existence of significant points of disengagement with its audience. These can
be seen in critical responses to the induction process of the Hall of Fame, the museum’s alignment with the established music industry, and its ‘retromania’, a nostalgic preoccupation with the cultural artefacts of a past that exists within living memory (Reynolds 2011).

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s induction process—which culminates in a ceremony that enacts a ritual drama of status elevation—has been widely criticized online and in the press for being elitist and indifferent to the popularity evidenced by record sales. Viewed as nepotistic and insular, it is also criticized for its misdirected efforts to represent a wide range of musical genres including pop and rap. Sites such as Future Rock Legends, UpRoxx and Ultimate Classic Rock monitor which artists are eligible and who has been ‘snubbed’ while journalists investigate the make-up of the nominating committee and the voting process, occasionally producing controversies that are taken up in the mainstream media—such as the ‘vote rigging’ controversy involving Jann Wenner which occurred in 2007. Criticisms of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by scholars have noted that the list of inductees corresponds to the ‘canonical lists found in popular music encyclopedias and guides’ (Leonard 2007, 154), and that the canon not only influences the narrative of the past but also defines the ‘radius of creativity for the future’ (Regev 2006, 2).

The creation of a canon within popular music began as ‘a struggle to raise [its] artistic prestige’ in the eyes of the broader culture (Regev 1994) but popular music’s emergence as a legitimate twentieth-century art form seems to have made this function obsolete. The process of drawing parallels with the aesthetic criteria associated with the canons of literature, visual art, and classical music was started in order to ‘condense complexity’ and confirm value in advance’ (Born 2010, 190) but has instead resulted in a voluble and volatile public dialogue about the way in which the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

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20 ‘Very disappointed to see Lou Reed and Ringo Starr be inducted tonight when much more talented artists like Phil Collins, Sting, Journey, Peter Frampton, Styx, Cheap Trick, CHICAGO, Def Leppard, Thin Lizzy, and Yes have yet to go in or even be nominated.’ Facebook http://ultimateclassicrock.com/should-be-in-the-rock-and-roll-hall-of-fame/
21 http://www.mtv.com/bands/m/music_geek/rockhallfame_040405
represents popular music’s shared cultural narrative. The ‘imagined totality’ (Guillory 1995) represented by the Hall of Fame has not, as it turns out, been sufficiently engaging to operated as a shared consensus. After grappling with the public’s critical response to the induction process—for many years protesting the exclusion of bands such as Kiss, Rush, and Yes—the museum began to relinquish its assumption about the public’s identification with the critical consensus emerging from within its nomination process. One clear expression of the museum’s evolving self-awareness with regard to the function of the induction process is evident in Henke’s statement: ‘The Hall of Fame aspect of the museum helps create the dialogue about what is important’ (Henke 2011). And, in an effort to increase public engagement with the process of induction, since 2012 the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame has hosted an online poll and included the ‘fan vote’ on the nomination ballot.\(^{22}\)

Interestingly, the induction process represents a rare instance in which a museum’s deliberations on questions of value are made public. While the collection is not entirely tied to the induction process of the hall of fame, it does provide its broad framework. This makes visible to the public part of what is usually a very discreet, perhaps even secretive internal process of the museum. In this regard, the museum’s process of canon construction could be seen as having increased the institution’s transparency.

The museum’s legitimacy as the custodian of the shared cultural narrative has also been called into question because of its alignment with the established music industry, which has played such an active role in shaping both the rock canon and the Hall of Fame. The central role played by the more ‘serious’ music press which came of age in the late 1960s (Rolling Stone, Crawdaddy and New Musical Express) and early 1990s (Spin, URB, Mojo, DJ, The Source) is widely acknowledged as having a formative influence on the development of the ‘rock canon’ (Von Appen and Doehring 2006; Karja 2006; Wyn Jones 2008; Shuker 2010). Equally significant in terms of shattering the assumed

\[^{22}\text{In 2013 a total of 1,390,504 people voted online for eligible inductees.}\]
consensus surrounding the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s version of popular music history is the deep involvement of members of the music industry in its founding, on its board and in the nominating process where they serve as ‘experts’. The nominating committee includes 75 members ‘mostly [music industry] executives and journalists’ who generate a list of nominees to be submitted to the approximately 750 voting members whose ranks include artists, historians, and music producers.\textsuperscript{23} The committee has been chaired for most of its history by one of two men: rock journalist and Bruce Springsteen manager Jon Landau; or Sire Records founder Seymour Stein, who is famous for having signed The Ramones, Talking Heads, Pretenders and Madonna. Other officers of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame board include Atlantic Records co-founder Ahmet Ertegun and \textit{Rolling Stone} founder Jann Wenner. The intense level of involvement of these individuals and the association of most of them with an era of popular music predicated on a media model that no longer defines the culture suggest another point of disengagement. They also serve as a reminder that popular music culture has long been in the grip of an ambivalence about ‘the industry’, imagining a world of authentic ‘rock and roll rebellion’ set against a ‘lurking business culture’ (Reising 2001, 497). In light of this, it might even make sense to suggest that the point of disengagement that results from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s close relationship to the music industry provides a vantage point from which we can recognise the existence of distinct social imaginaries. On the one hand is one that embraces a steeply hierarchical understanding of popular music that imagines a pantheon or ‘rock aristocracy’; on the other is a vision that champions the dense, pulsating, and unreckoned value of the people.

The perception that the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame exists in order to serve nostalgic preoccupations represents another point of disengagement resulting from its embrace of canonical values and narratives. Despite Jim Henke’s determination to avoid making it ‘a shrine to the baby-boomer acts’ he had grown up with (Henke 2009, 104), the Rock

\textsuperscript{23} Future Rock Legends acts almost as an accountability office of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. http://www.futurerocklegends.com
and Roll Hall of Fame has been regularly criticised for being just that (Reynolds 2011; Reising 2001; Pareles 2004; Kotarba 2013). Some artists who are invited to the induction ceremony (Axl Rose, John Lydon, Grace Slick) refuse outright because of their sense of the museum as an agent of nostalgia that either devalues their ongoing contribution via entombment or attempts to resurrect something already fully spent, thus resulting in a loss of cultural capital.

Nostalgia is widely viewed as a collective form of melancholy reflecting a deep-seated uncertainty about the future which results, in large part, from change having become constant and thus, paradoxically, the defining aspect of the present moment (Nora 2002). Its sentimental and conservative aspects embarrass modernist sensibilities and appear out of sync with the dynamic ‘visceral, emotional, tactile, aural’ youth cultures of popular music (Reising 2001, 497). However, within the heritage context it is also possible to appreciate the value of nostalgia’s resistance to the planned obsolescence at work within consumer capitalism (Gilroy 1993, 267) and its potential as a ‘curatorial tool to generate historical understanding’ (Leonard and Knifton 2015, 161).

By relying on canonical values and narratives as the meta-level of meaning, the popular music museum focuses on one portion of the field of value of popular music cultural heritage. Because that aspect of value is associated with a specific era of music history (and the artists, genres, styles, and politics associated with that era), it risks failure in its efforts to engage. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s mission states that it ‘exists to educate visitors, fans and scholars from around the world about the history and continuing significance of rock and roll music’. Guided by a canonical narrative that it sees as self-evident, the museum’s values appear as iconic rather than historical (Knell 2007). And the continuous reshaping of the formats, cultural affinities, forms of collective expression, and terms of value of popular music start to become a problem for the Hall of Fame.24

24 American Idol and the video game Rock Band were both mentioned in interview as popular music phenomena set to challenge the parameters of the museum (Henke 2011, Onkey 2011).
Through its identification with the rock canon, the museum appears nostalgic for a partic-
ular era of popular music history rather than providing a framework that can comprise
the vast array of popular music practices. In an era in which the cultural experience of
popular music becomes more and more widely distributed and increasingly non-linear as
a result of the shift from mass to network media, the popular music museum is challenged
to develop its collection in a way that simultaneously affirms the imaginary and the histor-
ical in order to maintain its commitment to the ‘continuing significance’ of its subject.

Popular culture is not always naturally pluralistic. And the grounding of the popular
music museum’s collection in the value of the mass-produced and personal puts it in
direct contact with this paradox of the popular. As the keeper of a popular art form, the
popular music museum is expected to reflect the popular opinion of the audience. But
because of the passion surrounding popular music for the many people for whom it has
played a role in how they have grown up and who they have become, because it is
such a powerful force in the distillation of identity, community, and social values and
because it often completely infuses their everyday life, the audience’s attachments and
sense of ownership can be quite profound. When the institution seems at odds with
popular opinion, it can become the focus of vociferous protest.

This is vividly evidenced by the stream of objections to the Rock and Roll Hall of
Fame’s induction of hip-hop artists, which began years before Grandmaster Flash and
the Furious Five’s induction in 2007, and accompanied the induction of Run-D.M.C.,
Public Enemy, and NWA. It is also evident in circumstances such as those recounted
by Vice President of Education Lauren Onkey, where at a public talk about rock ’n' roll
and the Vietnam War she was ‘confronted with the question ‘What is this Black agenda?’
(Onkey 2011). While the objections are seldom so explicitly racist, the disjunction
between popular opinion and the responsibilities of a public institution become readily

25 Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five were followed by Run-D.M.C., the Beastie Boys, and Public Enemy.
It’s not the ‘rap and roll hall of fame’ Kyle Smith posts in response to Run-D.M.C’s induction.
apparent in such circumstances. The museum’s reliance on the classic narrative of rock ‘n’ roll’s having evolved out of the blues of the Mississippi delta seems to have fixed the role of African-American artists and culture in its early history. However, as eras and artists of more recent memory become the focus of the museum’s collecting, induction, education, and exhibition programs, advocates for a less ecumenical definition of rock ‘n’ roll as guitar-based music played by groups of musicians—‘skinny white guys with guitars’—expect the museum to define its mission accordingly (Onkey 2011).

If the social imaginary is ‘that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy’ (Taylor 2002, 106), the popular music museum and segments of its popular audience appear to have several distinct social imaginaries. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a public institution has certain legal and ethical responsibilities, but, as Onkey explained in interview, it has also developed a specific identity that maintains an awareness of how ‘rock and roll desegregates and re-segregates’ and how this obliges the museum to make sure questions of equity and equality are ‘built into our thinking’ (Onkey 2011). At a more abstract level, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame draws upon a version of the history of rock ‘n’ roll as a story of identity, artistic innovation, and industry which belongs to a larger progressive national narrative. In contrast, the audience, unencumbered by responsibility for the ‘impersonal democratic procedures used to secure legitimacy and justice’ (Tucker 2005), draws upon a vernacular culture whose characteristic expressive style is rudely defiant and closely tied to the truth of personal experience, to secure visibility for their hopes and fears, expectations, and opinions. In the contemporary world where online posting allows everyone a to be a participant, the kinds of thoughts and opinions that might formerly have been seen as private or relegated to the realms of the undocumented are now fully visible within the public dialogue. This raises perplexing general questions about the merging of what political philosopher Charles Taylor describes as ‘common space’, a

26 Similarly, the objections to the induction of Joan Jett, Laura Nyro, and Dusty Springfield tell a similar story in which gender is displaced onto genre to justify exclusion either in the name of excellence or genre purity.
place for collective ritual, and the ‘public space’ which is inhabited by the ‘plurality of non-assembly’ (2002, 113), as well as questions about the changing nature of institutional identity and authority in an era of public participation.

As the keeper of the public memory, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ‘mediates competing interpretations of history’ and must continually work to ‘resolve the tensions between official, commercial and vernacular culture’ (Burgoyne 2003, 209–12). This means that, in a context where discrimination has popular appeal, pluralism ceases to be assumption and reappears as aspiration. Advancing the idea that public art offers a useful model for fashioning the museum of the future, Hilde Hein has written that welcoming political divisiveness and the ‘clash of opinions’, and assigning museums a role in ‘hosting controversy’ (Hein 2006, 151), can help the museum secure ‘the grander function comprising its public identity’ (xii) and make it ‘inherently purposive’ (Ibid., 158).

4.6 Music as another sort of immateriality
Music is difficult to fashion into the kind of object the museum immediately identifies as suitable for collection and exhibition; this creates a third point of disengagement between the popular music museum and its surrounding culture. As many scholars have noted, the popular music museum often struggles to incorporate music into its collections and exhibitions (Goldberg 1980; Juchartz and Rishoi 1997; Gurian 1999; Edge 2000; O’Keeffe 2013; Leonard 2007; 2010; 2015). As a result, music can often end up seeming like its status is subordinate to that of the materials—memorabilia and ephemera— which are created in relation to it. When objects are called upon to ‘bear witness’ to a culture that is at its core sonic and performative (O’Keeffe 2013), it can leave the impression that the museum has only a very limited ability to ‘capture or properly reflect the experience of listening to music and participating within its associated cultures’ (Leonard 2007, 148). That music presents a problem for the popular music museum might seem ironic, but there are significant reasons for this being the case.
One dimension of the dilemma is rooted in the complex forms of ownership through which songs are constituted as commercial ‘objects’. Popular music also challenges the museum with its curious physical properties, which contrast with the materials of the visual in terms of perception, experience, and cultural meaning. However, insofar as the song provides a musical ‘object’ it can help us see how the popular music museum might further deepen its relation to the culture it represents by evolving its exhibition experiments and imagining new possibilities for including music within its collection.

The song is the building block of the musical performance, it is the cornerstone of the music career, it provides the framework for audience engagement and both creates and becomes the storehouse of affect. Even for casual listeners, specific songs are often the focus of strong emotional attachments. The song’s lack of prominence in the museum’s recognition and realisation of the value of popular music might thus be a puzzling quality. However, each song exists within a complex regime of publishing, performance, and reproduction rights through which its legal identity morphs to the specific context in which it exists. The song is the basic unit of meaning within popular music, but it is not the central object of the popular music museum’s collection, because copyright divides its commercial essence from its material layer.

As Henke points out in interview, the museum is ‘not the primary source of the music played in the Rock Hall’; rather, it plays host to an in-house Sirius radio franchise. In the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, songs are continuously streamed through the museum as ‘an endless-loop soundtrack: early blues, Motown, Springsteen, Stones’ (Juchartz & Rishoi 1997, 318). Songs are also layered, in fragments, into the documentary media that either constitute or accompany its permanent and temporary exhibits. Seldom do the exhibits include songs in their entirety, except as part of a music video, because ‘musical reproduction rights…temper any plans for playback in galleries’ (Edge 2000). However, neither the soundtrack that suffuses the museum nor the song fragments that

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27 The use of ‘fragments’ rather than ‘samples’ is intended to distinguish the sample as a particular cultural form.
are used in its exhibits are properly considered part of the museum’s collection of artefacts. Some vinyl records become artefacts, and many songs are collected by the library and archive, but the material and immaterial aspects of music remain divided because of the complex way in which music is owned.

Ownership of a record only gives the owner the right to listen to its musical contents in private; it does not transfer ownership of the song to the owner of the object. Playing recorded music in public activates royalty regimes that use licensing agreements to extract value and protect against copyright infringements. Whether on a record album or stored in digital form in the cloud, the song lives elsewhere and can only be legally reattached to the object or listening experience through the payment of royalties.

Music’s commercial character means that part of the value of the collection always exists outside the museum within an entirely different institutional context. It is a situation that might even lead us to imagine the record company or publisher’s office as its own type of museum. Although rights are not what heritage discourse usually refers to in its analyses of the intangible aspects of culture, this shared system of values is co-present with the material culture of popular music and exercises a strong influence on how the museum collects—or more often does not collect—music, as well as how it integrates it in its exhibitions. Although seldom immediately visible within the social memories and experiences of its audiences, legal and technological frameworks are, nonetheless, always at play within popular music culture.

The presence of music within the popular music museum is dealt with in practical terms through contracts and licensing agreements. But the way in which it is presented also reflects the conceptual and experiential frameworks informing popular music’s integration in the museum. It is here that another, curious aspect of its immateriality becomes apparent.

*The curious immateriality of music*

Sound and music are often presumed to be immaterial but the situation is not simply so. Sonic phenomenon possesses a materiality that consists of vibrations, spaces, media,
technologies, perceptual apparatus, and the material conditions of its production (Kaye 2009; Henriques 2011). It has a curious status as something invisible yet perceptible through the physical sensations and effects it produces, and the traces it leaves behind (Ganchrow 2009). Its airborne nature, ability to surround and immerse, and propensity to bleed contrast sharply with the material object’s characteristic occupation of space with mass, which grounds it and makes it opposable and readily accessible to human visual perception with its frontal (coronal) orientation. Sonic phenomenon hovers between the material and immaterial in a way that makes it difficult to register within the ocular-centric world of museum exhibition or the materiality-oriented traditions of collections. Thus, music’s curious materiality suggests it might not only be difficult to exhibit but perhaps also ‘uncollectible’.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s streamed soundtrack exhibits music as a programmed broadcast, which evokes the ‘world’ of popular music and creates a multi-genre, multi-era ambience. The soundtrack is not a product of the museum’s own collection but rather a service purchased from a third party: Sirius radio (Henke 2011). The museum also uses music as accompaniment and illustration within the documentary media integrated into its exhibits. Here the museum generally uses the song fragment in a manner that assumes the audience is already familiar with the whole song, and will access it in its entirety through processes of recollection, which will simultaneously activate the personal meanings and memories the person may have attached to the song. Thus, the song fragments are exhibited to cue recollection rather than as cultural objects possessing their own integrity. Interestingly, in instances where a song is played on headphones, its effect is more like that of the familiar artefact in terms of being a particular, bounded entity, and in terms of the sort of focused attention it elicits.

The temporality of the song, which gives it the character of an event, represents another of the challenges of integrating popular music into the museum. Even if copyright were...
to belong to the popular music museum, it would still be faced with the question of how to align the duration of the song with the timeframes characteristic of the museum visit and the encounter with the artefact. With the average visitor encounter with a museum object lasting about 17 seconds (Smith and Smith 2001), as compared with the three to five minutes a song takes to play (Swanson 2013), the curatorial challenge is clear. If the museum were to treat the song as an artefact, it would require some experimentation and innovation to accommodate the temporality of the song.

Unlike the temporality of the song, the visual or material artefact is inherently elastic. We think of the ‘whole’ of the artwork or artefact in terms of its three-dimensionality, its occupation of space—not its movement through time. For the song to be treated as an artefact, its exhibition would require consideration of how each song, in possession of its own duration, might be presented as a particular work. And for this to become significant, the museum would need to encourage visitors to engage with the entire song by developing new visiting conventions to support museum listening.

The curious immateriality of music need not predestine it to exile from the museum. When the song and its duration are understood as equivalent, it is easier to view it as a musical object that more closely resembles the material artefact. This, in turn, makes it easier to see it as something that might be added to the collection. Conceiving of the musical object in this manner avoids confusing the music with its media and, at the same time, reflects the disaggregating influence of digitisation on popular music. Both the tangible formats and the newer virtual formats used to record, reproduce, and circulate popular music can be considered as ‘musical objects’ that might warrant a place in the collection.

Many researchers have pointed out the need to rethink how artefacts and collections might be conceived in light of changes in media format and the resulting renegotiation of cultural value (Macdonald 1997; Parry 2007; Henning 2006; Giaccardi 2012; Kidd 2014). What constitutes a museum ‘object’ continues to evolve in ways that allow it to be ‘recognised to be in a state of motion’ and to ‘occupy or migrate through different states
and media’ (Parry 2007, 68). We can also see how the development of the notion of the virtual helps expand the understanding of the collection in ways that can accommodate associated information, such as related sounds or descriptions of use, along with the artefact (Drazin et al. 2013). These issues are both practical and conceptual. Sometimes they require the museum to reconsider not only how it will allocate resources or integrate new initiatives with existing programs, but what it is, what it does, and whom it should serve.

As the media formats of popular music continue to proliferate and as new ways of accessing content develop, the nature of what is collectible changes as well. Already we can see how digital file formats have redefined the ‘musical object’ and rendered the once ‘neutral’ vinyl record visible as an historical object. Similarly, the surplus of music-related data from online downloading and social media sharing also constitute new ‘artefacts’ of popular music culture. As part of the history and culture of popular music, they too are likely to be considered part of the remit of the museum at some point in the future. And as these sorts of cultural materials begin to appear on the horizon, the concepts and infrastructure upon which the museum’s collection relies will be asked to stretch to include digital artefacts not only as supplemental information but as the collectible object itself. Within such a context the physical objects, the ‘plural and distributed materiality’ of popular music (Born 2012), will exist as one of a range of assets that constitute the collection and represent popular music culture.

4.7 Conclusion

The popular music museum declines aspects of the conventional provision of the museum and experiments with new shapes and structures. Through analysis of its artefacts, examination of documentation, and discussion with professional custodians of popular music (James Henke, Lauren Onkey, and Andy Leach), this chapter has shown how the

29 Drazin et al. 2013 detail a research project of the UCL Department of Anthropology in which the museum tries to collect the sounds of an arrowhead along with the object.
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame establishes the museum value of the ‘art form that is everywhere’ and how by establishing a framework for valuing its mass-produced objects the museum expands its own notion of value. It also demonstrates how acknowledging audience engagements based on affect and perceived aura proves an important means for integrating the value of personal meaning and memory. By adjusting conventional museum thinking about collection in order to match the qualities of its subject, the popular music museum is able to engage the social imaginary of popular music culture. However, the changing shape of the museum brings to light some ongoing challenges and underlying tensions that remain unresolved. These include the contests created in relation to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s reliance on the ‘rock canon’ to guide its understanding of what is important within popular music history; the paradox of the popular which challenges the pluralistic values of the popular music museum; and the difficulties of integrating popular music—with its complex ownership and curious materiality—into the museum’s collection and exhibitions programme.

By transforming the conventions of the collection and bringing new challenges to the surface, the popular music museum demonstrates how deeply the influence of media is felt within the museum. Initially a culture that evolved in relation to mass media, popular music reflects the influence of the recording and distribution technologies that make it possible, as well as the shared (and sometimes contested) legal-commercial and critical-aesthetic frameworks that inform how it is produced and consumed. In order to successfully represent such a culture, the popular music museum has tailored some of the conceptual framework of the collection to its particular features, and absorbed some of the qualities of its subject in the process. We have seen, for example, that by welcoming the personal, the museum has endorsed popular music culture’s characteristic merging of material and intangible heritage. Similarly, accepting and advancing the value of the mass-produced has rendered irrelevant the idea that the museum is inherently aligned with ‘high’ culture. And through its preliminary embrace of music, it aligns itself with the contemporary interest in the ‘experiential’ rather than the ocular-centric traditions of
the conventional museum. Thus, the popular music museum is born of mass media and reflects significant aspects of the social relations, identities, communities, audiences, and economy that form through its mediations (Born 2011). We might therefore expect that as the media landscape shifts, replacing mass media with networked media platforms, the popular music museum will continue to evolve in order to reflect popular music’s changing location within that landscape.
5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at the exhibition as another of the provisions that get refracted within the popular music museum. We see how the Experience Music Project realises a desire, shared by many in the museum sector, to use its exhibitions to create a platform, irreducible to any one of its parts, upon which to occasion heritage. *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* serves as the central case study for this chapter, and is used to demonstrate the importance of spatial dynamics in using an exhibition as a heritage site. The chapter argues that the exhibitions of the Experience Music Project successfully engage their audiences because they are rooted in a multimodal and non-monumental understanding of exhibition space. As a result, the museum is able to support the sort of identification and sense of co-ownership of the cultural narrative required to create an authentic ‘congregant space’ in which collective memory becomes cultural heritage (Gurian 2006).

The term multimodal refers to an exhibition’s scenography or *mise-en-scène* in a manner that includes its navigation, exhibition design, and use of media. It also directly refers to the communicative effect of those various elements. Bringing together ideas from social semiotics and design research, the discussion that follows provides a detailed analysis of the spatial communication and layers of discourse of the *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* exhibition. Here the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen and others using social semiotics to examine exhibition space (Meng 2004; Lindstrand and Insulander 2012) is used in combination with research on museum space that emphasises the non-narrative approaches (Basu 2007; Hillier and Tzortzi 2011; Skolnick 2012) to ground the exhibition analysis.

The term non-monumental is one that has been devised to contrast with the characteristics of a kind of space that Henri Lefebvre describes as possessing ‘monumentality’, a singular
spatiality representing collective identity (Cvoro 2006). It is used here to describe how
the museum creates a sense of membership by implicating its audience in the cultural
narrative they encounter in the museum and affirming the continuity between popular
music history and their own experience. The second half of the chapter continues the
investigation of exhibition space by detailing how the Experience Music Project’s
non-monumentality is realised by its architecture, within its exhibitions, and in terms of
its innovative information infrastructure. It draws upon the work of Elaine Heumann
Gurian and Lily Kong, in its analysis of how personal memory figures in the creation of
connections between the individual and the collective, thus explaining how popular music
museums such as the Experience Music Project have been well placed, owing to their
subject, to create authentic congregant spaces where it is possible to occasion heritage.

5.2 Background to the Experience Music Project

Establishment

The Experience Music Project grew out of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen’s efforts
to establish a Jimi Hendrix museum. Although there had been several failed initiatives
to have Jimi Hendrix publicly honoured in his birthplace, the City of Seattle, it was not
until Allen began to speak to the press about his interest in establishing a Hendrix
museum that the possibility of securing this public recognition seemed possible. In the
fall of 1992 Allen discussed the idea of the Hendrix museum with city officials and
other heritage institutions (most notably the Museum of History and Industry and the
Jimi Hendrix Foundation) in order to evaluate its feasibility and assess the opportunities
for collaboration. The process of assembling a team of music and museum experts began
that fall and by February 1993, it had drawn together seven people who worked under the
direction of the founder’s sister and business partner, Jody Allen Patton (Rosencrans 2011).

The initial development group included a curator from the Museum of History and
Industry, several architects, and Jim Fricke and Peter Blecha, two popular music experts
who would go on to become part of the first curatorial team of the new museum
(Blecha 2005, 70–75). Working from the offices of Vulcan Inc. (Paul Allen’s umbrella company for a host of subsidiaries including Vulcan Aerospace and the Seattle Seahawks as well as several other heritage initiatives such as those focusing on the history of flight and the history of the computer), the team negotiated with the city for a location and set about acquiring guitars, costumes, and ephemera for the museum’s collection. They became deeply immersed in an intense period of research in which every presupposition about what a museum was or should be was was thrown up in the air (Bruce 2006). Chris Bruce recounts how out of a series of very open-ended discussions a kind of a flagship question emerged: ‘How can you get an audience involved in a hat?’ (Bruce 2006, 133). A provocative reference to Allen’s star artefact—Jimi Hendrix’s black Resistol West-erner—the question suspended any presuppositions that material artefacts should necessarily have precedence in the museum and reminded the team of the centrality of audience engagement.

The group visited Disney franchises and Las Vegas attractions, social history and art museums, absorbing ideas about what enabled audience involvement and analysing what stood in its way. What evolved from within that research was a plan for ‘one of the first museums of the new millennium’ (Bruce 2006, 132), a museum that would directly concern itself with musical experience as well as how music informed the lives of its audience. It was, as the term ‘project’ suggested, an enterprise built on collaboration and developed through experimentation in order to yield results within a specific time frame. The Experience Music Project development team also sought to actively re-think the provision of the museum in order to welcome a popular audience and take full advantage of the opportunities represented by new technology (Bruce 2006, 132). Early on, it was decided that the Experience Music Project would devise an innovative logic for exhibition in order to distinguish itself from the tradition of ‘serial display’, creating instead a space of immersive experience and spectacle. The museum would let ‘visitors explore their own creativity’ rather than have them follow the historical narrative set out
by the museum (Blecha 2005, 85) and use the Web to bring EMP’s activities directly into the home’ (Woog 2000, 13).

In 1996, internationally renowned architect Frank Gehry was engaged to design the building within which the Experience Music Project’s vision of the museum of the twenty-first century would come to life. It had been decided that the museum would be built in an area known as the Seattle Centre, an urban park and entertainment centre on the site where Seattle had hosted the 1962 World’s Fair. The Experience Music Project’s location connects it with two landmarks that evoke yesterday’s vision of the future: The Space Needle, an observation tower built for the World’s Fair and famous for its hurricane- and earthquake-proof engineering; and the Seattle Center Monorail, which operates as part of the city’s public transit system and passes through the museum. The project was provided with a $50-$60 million budget by Allen and a groundbreaking ceremony took place in June 1997.

![Figure 5.1 Experience Music Project. Photograph by Cacophony.](image)

The Experience Music Project is a 140,000-square-foot landmark building, noted for both the use of advanced aviation design technology in its construction and its symbolic evocation of rock ‘n’ roll’s iconic smashed guitar (Fig. 5.1). It was designed with the intention of expressing the ‘fluid and organic’ quality of music. The exterior features 3,000 panels made of painted aluminum shingles that modulate the red and gold finishes
so that they produce different effects in response to changing light conditions. Inside are three floors featuring interactive environments where audiences can play and record music (Sound Lab), perform and record at a concert venue (On Stage), create playlists and vote for favourite songs, or participate in educational programmes in the Learning Labs; a 191-seat theatre and state of the art video projects wall; and exhibition spaces that often include interactive exhibits or kiosks. While the original design included the installation of embedded sub-woofers to ensure sound resonance, the interior finishes reflect Gehry’s ‘love of raw materials such as concrete tiles, metal walls, and open atrium areas’, which, curator Jasen Emmons pointed out in interview, today create numerous challenges for presenting sound in the museum (Emmons 2011). Another surprising feature of the museum’s design is that it does not include the curatorial offices, which are located a few blocks away in a building alongside the administrative offices and the collections storage.

Collections

Paul Allen began his personal collection of popular music artefacts with the purchase of Jimi Hendrix’s black Resistol Westerner hat at a Christie’s auction in 1991 and in the following years continued to acquire guitars, outfits, tapes of unmixed recordings, posters, and handwritten lyrics by the music icon and Seattle native. Roughly a decade earlier, a part-time musician, record store employee and rock archeologist, Peter Blecha, had begun assembling his collection of records, print materials, and ephemera from the Northwest region’s various music scenes—garage rock, early rhythm and blues, hotel orchestras, traditional Native American music, and punk rock. When the Experience Music Project purchased Blecha’s collection in 1997, it merged the two originating collections to create a hybrid of pantheon and people’s history.

Building any collection involves successfully responding to both practical and conceptual challenges. Part of the challenge of collecting for a popular music museum is recognising which objects will most effectively tell the story of popular music—in
what way and to whom. As with other museums, the telling of the story is often shaped by the opportunities created by private collectors. Once the Experience Music Project evolved beyond the ‘Hendrix museum’ phase of its development, it committed itself to creating a collection that ‘blurs the line between musical and social history’ (Woog 2000, 14). The intent was to make sure the experience of the audience became a crucial part of the story. During their ‘hunting and gathering’ expeditions the curators ‘focused on finding artefacts that are contextually important, not necessarily famous’, recognising that an ‘obscure fanzine or prototype electric guitar may be as valuable historically—and as compelling in its own way—as an instrument once owned by a rock god’ (Woog 2000, 14). The cataloguing system included ‘History Remarks’ in order to capture that contextual information which is especially important in order to establish why specific mass-produced objects are ‘worth preserving’ (Maguire et al. 2005, 18).

In 1996 the Experience Music Project had acquired 17,000 artefacts; by the year 2000 there were 80,000 artefacts in the collection; three years later the collection comprised 140,000 artefacts—musical instruments, artists’ personal effects such as clothing and jewellery, posters, other promotional materials, handwritten lyrics, set lists, and photographs and films of historic performances (Blecha 2005). When the museum opened in June 2000, only about half of the collection had been catalogued (Maguire et al. 2005). From its inception, the museum was active in recording oral histories and connecting them in the database with objects to which they were relevant or referred, again blurring a conventional boundary—this time between artefact and document—and fostering the emergence of hybrids and flexible taxonomies.

Early on in the development phase it was also determined that the Experience Music Project would be a technology-oriented enterprise with a ‘commitment to using digital strategies to open up the collection to public use’ (Rosencrans 2011). In order to provide unprecedented access to the collection and encourage self-directed use of the resources, the Experience Music Project created the Digital Collection interface in such a way
that ‘storytelling capabilities are facilitated by the symbiotic relationship between the museum’s cataloguing system and workstation in the Digital Lab and the Web’ (Andolsek and Freedman 2001). The Museum Exhibit Guide (MEG) was a handheld device (Fig. 5.2) that provided audio descriptions and demonstrations (for example, of the sound of the various instruments in the Guitar Gallery) but also allowed visitors to bookmark exhibited artefacts while at the museum and then use their visitor ticket ID to call up and further explore them online at a later date. Although it was a pioneering exploration of the museum’s digital interface and an extension of the museum visit using a ‘networking model of presenting content’ (Bruce 2006, 147), the expensive MEG system had to be retired in 2007 (Gibson 2011). Despite being ‘way ahead of the curve in the museum world in imagining what could be done with technology’ (Rosencranks 2011), the rapid evolution of technology and commerce that saw the mass adoption of smart phones in the mid-2000s (and the eclipse of the web behind social media) eventually resulted in a changed landscape in which the MEG no longer made sense.

Figure 5.2 Museum Exhibit Guide (MEG) in use. Photograph by Mark Teppo.

Exhibitions

According to Curatorial Director Jasen Emmons, the ‘art of exhibition’ has always been of central concern to the curators of the Experience Music Project (2011). As an organisation that was and is, in the words of former curator Dave Rosencrans, ‘always
been heavily stocked with talented people’ (Rosencrans 2011), the Experience Music Project developed a creative multimodal approach to exhibitions. Considerable resources are invested in designing exhibitions that communicate through artefacts and interactives but also by means of *mise-en-scène*. Emmons recalled in interview how for *Bob Dylan’s American Journey, 1956–1966* (November 2004–August 2006) the museum brought in 16,000 pounds of iron ore which was worked into the exhibition backdrop, and created custom exhibition labels printed on suede for Dylan’s folk era and leather for his electric era (Emmons 2011). He also recalled how curator Rosencrans’s *Island Revolution: Jamaican Rhythm from 1956–1966* (June 2001–January 2002) included a custom-made dub chamber (Fig. 5.3) that allowed visitors inside it to listen to dub classics at body-vibrating volume with the rhythmic thumping behind the wall serving as the ‘heartbeat of the exhibition’ (Emmons 2011).

![Island Revolution Dub Chamber](image)

*Figure 5.3 Island Revolution Dub Chamber. Photograph by Dave Rosencrans.*

Since opening in June 2000, the museum has presented seventy-two exhibitions, including shows about rock photography, Chicago blues, Beatlemania, punk poster design, the birth of hip-hop, the art of songwriting, and the disco era. Between its opening and 2010, the museum’s primary focus was popular music, with the exhibitions representing its
genres and social history (23%), artists and bands (21%), visual representations and promotions (17%), and music making (13%). Even with the primary emphasis on popular music, almost 25% of the exhibitions during its first decade were dedicated to topics that were not primarily about music; for instance, Frank Gehry, letterpress posters, and science fiction. Of the twenty exhibitions that have been mounted in the last five years, 65% have, in keeping with the museum’s evolving mission, presented other aspects of popular culture—including film, comics, and sports. Only twelve exhibitions (17%) have been developed in collaboration with independent curators or other institutions: two with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and three with the Smithsonian. Other collaborators have included the Harley Davidson Museum, Lucasfilm, and the Jim Henson Foundation.

**Recent Developments**

The modification of the Experience Music Project programming mandate and the inclusion of the word ‘museum’ in its name are the most obvious changes to the institution’s identity. The museum’s current mission statement reads: ‘EMP is a leading-edge nonprofit museum, dedicated to the ideas of risk-taking that fuel contemporary popular culture’. After having started out as the Experience Music Project (EMP) and then having changed its name to the Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame (EMP|SFM) in 2004, the institution adopted the EMP Museum as its new moniker and visual identity in 2010 (built around the original logo graphic) using the keywords ‘music, sci-fi and pop culture’ (Fig. 5.4) to signal an ever-widening remit.

![Experience Music Project graphic identity. Source: John James of EMP Digital.](image-url)
The museum’s provision of the MEG-enabled extended visit proved to be an unsustainable experiment. Today, the digital profile of the EMP Museum is fairly modest and involves maintaining the several channels that provide program-related content or documentation. The collection is no longer accessible for online research and the idea of the customized experience is no longer something the museum actively tries to support—nor has the museum produced a phone app to connect its audience to its content via the cloud. While interactive technology was once a defining feature of the Experience Music Project, the museum’s annual report places greater emphasis on immersive technology (such as the Oculus Rift *Game of Thrones: Ascend the Wall* experience) and the ongoing use of multimedia within the context of exhibition. Network technology, social media, the Internet, and the web go unmentioned in the report.

According to former curator Dave Rosencrans, in the years leading up to the Experience Music Project’s opening and its first few years of operation, Jody Allen Patton would regularly remind her staff that they were ‘doing something here that no one has ever attempted before’. It was a rallying cry that, according to Rosencrans, ‘left some of us waggishly thinking maybe there’s a reason…’ (2011).

5.3 Using multimodal techniques to exhibit popular music

The Experience Music Project is a popular music museum that offers its visitors a multi-modal experience which layers exhibition elements and mixes media in a manner that brings together personal and collective memory in a participatory public dialogue. This is vividly demonstrated in one of the museum’s landmark exhibitions, *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses*. Using this as our central example, and borrowing methodology from social semiotics, our discussion here will examine the ideational, interpersonal, and textual layers of meaning produced within the exhibition and discuss how the combination of artefacts and media assets is used to create an environment which locates the visitor ‘inside the content’ (Bruce 2006, 138).
Because *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* has been undertaken with an awareness that it tells a story that belongs to ‘hundreds of people’ (McMurray and Novoselic 2011), the idea of audience participation has been built into the curatorial framework. We will look at several of the opportunities for participation in terms of how they open up the cultural narrative to the idea of co-ownership (by both museum and audience). This prepares the way for the subsequent section that focuses on how participation and a sense of shared ownership establish the exhibition as a context for occasioning heritage.

*Dynamics of display: tracing Nirvana’s network*

The Experience Music Project’s *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* demonstrates how the exhibition recognises and responds to the various understandings or interpretations that converge around its artefacts, but also operates as a larger semantic unit through which more general concepts are expressed. Kurt Cobain’s avocado green velour V-neck pullover provides a particularly dramatic illustration of how specific display strategies can simultaneously activate and temper the cultural (and sub-cultural) associations that envelop an object and, ultimately, put them in the service of a curatorial thesis.

A mass-produced item given a second life after having been purchased from a thrift shop and put back into use, its origin and manufacture remain uncertain and unimportant in contrast to its provenance through which it is rarified by having belonged to Cobain.\(^{30}\) Closely associated with the person who once wore it, the pullover functions as a relic through its fetishistic association with Cobain’s body and being. It also functions as an icon of an anti-consumerist ethic and its attendant forms of symbolic play and creativity, which became the emblematic values underwriting Seattle style. The clothes Cobain wore were often orphaned and sometimes threadbare; he was know for his grandpa sweaters and drag queen faux-fur animal-print coats and often layered these over pajamas.

\(^{30}\) A more traditional artefact analysis might be concerned with information about the popularity of men’s velour sweaters in the ’70s and ’80s and the relation between fashionable designs by Pierre Cardin and Christian Dior and the popularisation of the style by retailers like JC Penney and Montgomery Ward using brands such as Towncraft and Career Club.
or long johns. An example of early -’80s ‘disco wear’, the velour pullover adds a layer of irony to its other associations. Cobain’s look became defining for ‘grunge’ culture and the green pullover speaks to this constellation of meanings. Additionally, this item demonstrates how artefact and media are often deeply imbricated within popular music culture. For many visitors, the shirt is already familiar as the one worn by Cobain when Nirvana appeared on the cover of the January 1992 issue of SPIN, four months after the release of their breakout album *Nevermind*. The potential for this artefact to mobilise a complex set of cultural associations is further intensified by the emotional and personal recollections visitors might have about the garment and its owner, about what the cover of SPIN means in the context of alternative culture, and so on. All this potential significance is available for interpretation by the curator as he or she devises the exhibition.

What happens when this particular artefact is exhibited at the Experience Music Project demonstrates how interpretation both utilises and offsets meaning.

Figure 5.5  Kurt Cobain’s velour pullover. Photograph by author.

A display case that houses Cobain’s velour pullover (along with a copy of the SPIN magazine cover on which the singer wears it) sits just outside the exhibit area proper in
an atrium housing an information desk, the entrance to an oral history lounge, and a staircase leading to upper-level exhibits. From several vantage points the object in the display case visually aligns with a commissioned sound sculpture by Seattle artist Trimpin. A three-storey-high tornado-shaped column of guitars, the sculpture aligns with the garment that was once worn by Cobain (and now stands in for his physical presence), appearing in the background of the pullover as a geyser-like eruption. Across the foyer in the main stairway hangs a billboard-sized photo blow-up of Cobain crowd surfing and playing guitar. It is an image that suggests the fragility of the body and the susceptibility of anything held aloft to, eventually, fall. By presenting those artefacts and images guaranteed to evoke Cobain’s absence, the display strategy acknowledges his significance immediately and spectacularly.31 This arrangement preemptively reveals what might elsewhere be treated as the climax of the Nirvana narrative: the demise of the band as a result of Cobain’s suicide. The rhetorical effect is to acknowledge the importance of the singer and guitarist of the band while limiting the potential for Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses to serve (primarily) as a shrine to Cobain.32 Throughout the rest of the exhibition, Cobain’s life will serve as just one of several storylines that are woven together to engage the visitor with a multi-faceted, decades-long social history of a musical underground that eventually transformed the mainstream. The artefact constitutes but one dimension of the exhibition experience; its semiotic potential is actualised within the context of the exhibition but lends its power to the larger configuration of meaning the exhibition proposes.

The atrium also hosts two large-scale diagrams tracing the multiple connections that link Nirvana to more than a dozen other rock bands. One is the Seattle Band Map created by local musician and DJ Rachel Ratner; the other is a community installation version of the band map that invites visitors to add, edit, and annotate the information with dry-erase

31 The same artefact has been exhibited in a very different fashion previously as part of an exhibit including Frank Sinatra’s jacket, Hendrix’s hat, and other ‘rock style’ garments. http://seeingred.retrofit.net/archives/2002_05.php
32 Interestingly, the online documentation of the artefact works to do the opposite: presenting a dramatically light artefact in isolation that results in the intensification of its reliquary quality.
markers (Fig. 5.6). The location and proximity of the two diagrams and the ‘star object’ suggest an overarching curatorial concern: the individual artist and their relation to the community or music scene. At the same time, an ambient musical composition incorporating familiar snatches of the ‘Come as You Are’ riff seeps out into the atrium from the exhibition’s darkened entry. Thus the atrium serves as a kind of exhibition antechamber that mediates the visitor’s entry and exit. It both prepares them for a fuller immersion in the content of *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* and suggests a connection with the world outside the exhibition by allowing some of the content to spill out.

What this arrangement makes evident is the plasticity of the artefact, and especially its mutability in relation to other elements. It provides a clear indication of how space is instrumental in shaping meaning and demonstrates the centrality of display techniques within museum communication. Furthermore, it establishes how the curator, by using particular display techniques, can frame his or her subject and advance a thesis. More specifically, it begins to reveal how the popular music museum uses these display techniques to create a layered and dynamic presentation that communicates with its audience as knowing participants with whom it shares ownership of the cultural narrative of popular music.
Creating a layered, dynamic spatial experience

Inside the gallery, the *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* exhibition unfolds within a u-shaped passageway. From whichever end of the exhibition the visitor chooses to enter, its layout obscures the famous *In Utero* stage prop and other items from the breakthrough period of Nirvana’s fabled rise to fame. The space provides no vista or vantage point from which to ‘collect’ the entire presentation as a visual phenomenon. Consequently, the visitor’s navigation of the space becomes critical to the assembly of parts into any larger whole. The exhibition space is divided into areas (but not separate galleries), with the movement of the visitor guided by the arc of the exhibition space. The space allows attention to veer from particular ‘on that exact day’ details to general observations about
decades-long developments; from the materiality of the recording process to the visual style of album artwork; from the actual geography of the northwest to the international imaginary of punk rock.

On the outer wall of the exhibition space are posters and album covers that trace connections with artists from major music centres such as LA, NYC, and London as well as fledgling U.S. scenes such as Boston, Minneapolis, and Chicago; along with the map of the sites of musical activity in the Northwest region; a display of the Sub Pop output from the era; and interactive stations housing collections of video from the museum’s Oral History Project (Fig. 5.7). Along the interior wall are the display cases of artefacts relating directly to the musical history of Nirvana and behind it is a room where fan testimonials are recorded and screened. This arrangement effectively establishes the relationship between the culture of practice and that of influence but relies on the visitor to make specific links.

What is also apparent is that the exhibition is insistent on situating Nirvana within several spheres of activity: the local network of friends and collaborators involved in the writing, performing, recording, and selling of music (lyric sheets, demo tapes, interviews with people from Sub Pop, and an exhibit on graphic design of independent labels); and an overarching constellation of musical influences and inspirations that extended beyond the immediate location both in space and time (the punk rock listening station and Seattle aftermath album wall). As Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses curator Jacob McMurray reflects, when interviewed on this point, the exhibition is ‘a story of hundreds of people involved in the scene at that time’ (McMurray 2011), thus framing the exhibition in a manner that places emphasis on a social narrative that includes the band as well as its influences, its fans, the music industry, and, to some extent, the political landscape of the 1990s. The exhibition’s subtitle ‘taking punk to the masses’ summarises the curatorial thesis and provides the conceptual framework that organises the display of artefacts and overall exhibition design.
*Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* is a variegated experience involving artefacts, text panels, screened and projected video documentation, touch-screen kiosks, a recording booth, info graphics, listening stations, and an ambient soundtrack. It comprises over two hundred labelled artefacts and more than four hours of curated audio-visual material, plus additional user-contributed video content. To watch, read and view all the content included in *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* would take approximately six or seven hours, far in excess of the typical museum visit. Although the Experience Music Project has not carried out detailed visitor studies of this exhibition, Curatorial Director Jasen Emmons (2011) notes that the average time spent in the exhibition seems to exceed the usual length. One is never out of eyeshot of a screen within the exhibition. Time is thick and information is dense and layered, leaving one with the sense of being inside something too complex, too intense to fit the notion of the visit. Indeed, ‘to have visitors feel like they had been “inside” the content’ was a driving objective of the museum’s design (Bruce 2006, 141).

**Multimodal exhibition design**

What is evident in *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* is an approach to exhibition design that accommodates the multimodal culture of popular music. Although there are several other ways we might describe an exhibition such as *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses*—as labyrinthine (Basu 2007), prismatic (Peña Ovalle 2009), scenographic (Crawley 2012), or spectacular (Bruce 2006)—using the term ‘multimodal’ has a number of advantages. Most obvious is that it corresponds to the character of popular music as an art form in which media and embodied perception are fundamental. In addition, it has come into use within museum studies in ways that can readily be applied to the exhibitions of the popular music museum. One use of the term multimodal is found in discussions of digital heritage, where it is used to describe the inclusion of several different kinds of converging, user-navigated content (Mason 2012; White, Bilenko, and Cucerzan 2007). Another use of the term multimodal is grounded in discourse analysis and social semiotics and, when applied to the exhibition context (Meng 2004; Lindstrand
and Insulander 2012), provides useful conceptual tools for analysing the layers or levels of communication being enacted within the exhibition—for sorting the surplus of meaning that characterises public culture.

Lindstrand and Insulander’s proposal of a multimodal method for detailed and systematic analysis of exhibitions proves useful for illuminating the discursive operations of *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* (2012, 33). Their method rests on Gunther Kress’s concept of ‘meta-functions’, which identifies three layers of meaning constituting a communicative event: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Lindstrand and Insulander establish correspondences between Kress’s language-based method and the spatial order of the exhibition with the ideational corresponding to what the exhibition represents; the social relation between participants proposed within the communication being the interpersonal; and the way in which the exhibition’s internal coherence compares with other exhibitions as the textual meta-function.

Using this lens it is possible to identify the ‘ideational meta-function’ of the Experience Music Project’s Nirvana exhibition with its creation of a social history of the emergence within the mainstream of the ’90s underground music scenes, which it does by bringing together artefacts pertaining to the band with others that illustrate a broader social history. In multimodal analysis the term ‘textual’ denotes the overall coherence of the various strands that constitute the communicative event and might be thought of in terms of a thesis or the ideological orientation of a given communication. *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses*’ ‘textual meta-function’ might be summarized as: punk is the prehistory of grunge and culture is created within a network. This can be seen in its social historical focus and what it has to say about what prepares the way for Nirvana’s game-changing artistic contribution while simultaneously asserting that ‘music history is never just three guys’. The textual meta-function is the synthesis of form and content and can be seen in the curatorial and design team’s use of available resources—space, architecture, light, sound, et cetera—to realise the curatorial thesis (McMurray and Novoselic 2011).
Other techniques that anticipate the audience’s selective engagement and appropriation are the use of brevity and abstraction. Such rhetorical techniques indicate the museum’s expectation that visitors will bring information and knowledge with them, enabling them to elaborate on and contextualise what they encounter in the exhibition. The surplus of content, the density of content and the coexistence of different ‘meta-functions’ involve both museum and audience in synchronistic sense-making routines (Connaway et al. 2008).

A good example of this is found in the section of the exhibition where Dave Grohl’s drums, Krist Novoselic’s Ibanez Black Eagle bass, and Kurt Cobain’s Mosrite Gospel guitar are displayed as a kind of instrumental skeleton of a band. With the drums against the wall and the bass and guitar facing one another in separate display cases, the display represents not only Nirvana but the basic elements of countless other punk rock bands. It is as if the room echoes the famed Sniffin’ Glue invocation: ‘This is a chord. This is another. This is a third. Now form a band.’ The Mosrite is identified as the one on which “Smells Like Teen Spirit” is reputed to have been written and first performed, but other aspects of its significance—its status as a legendary brand with a genealogy linking it to the Ventures, MC5, Arthur Lee, and the Ramones—go unmentioned. The level of interest in or knowledge of this sort of additional significance that each visitor brings will vary considerably. By leaving space for this, the museum seems to recognise that the story it tells is incomplete and could always be supplemented by additional information. In fact, by offering a less detailed interpretation, the museum leaves room for the audience to fill in the blanks. While this might be counterintuitive in many other heritage contexts, here it can suggest the museum’s non-exclusive claim over its subject.

Thus, the multimodal curatorial approach appears consistent with the values associated with the visitor-centred notion of the museum. It advances the claims made on behalf of the Experience Music Project as a model of a born-popular, media-friendly institution that can successfully reflect the culture it represents. The idea that the museum makes information, concepts, and stories available to visitors to appropriate ‘experientially’ is
important to the mission of the Experience Music Project but of particular importance for the occasioning of heritage is the specific character of the modes of participation supported by the museum. For it is through participation that the sense of membership required to enable cultural inheritance can occur.

**Participation and the co-ownership of the cultural narrative**

Participation is a broad and complex phenomenon with several distinct protocols. As a general term, ‘participation’ helps us to understand certain developments in the museum sector at large, but to fully understand how the popular music museum’s exhibitions occasion cultural heritage requires a more specific understanding of its dynamics. Many of the Experience Music Project programmes involve a participatory dimension. The museum’s Sound Lab permits visitors to try their hand at recording music, while previous configurations of the museum provided access to the Digital Lab where individuals could create, explore, and arrange digital artefacts from the collection within a Thinkmap visualisation environment or the lounge where the Oral History collection was made available. Previous exhibitions also integrate participatory opportunities. *Island Revolution*, for instance, featured a purpose-built dub chamber for deep listening, while *American Sabor* invited visitors to learn or perform the dance moves of the popular music of Latin cultures. And although digital technology figures prominently in the thinking of and about the Experience Music Project, participation cannot be reduced to ‘technophilic interactivity’ (Bishop 2012)—as the Seattle Band Map project, which welcomes the visitor into the Nirvana exhibition, clearly demonstrates.

The Seattle Band Map was initially a personal project of musician, DJ and educational outreach coordinator at Seattle radio station KEXP Rachel Ratner. She began by mapping the connections between her own band, Partman Parthorse, and those of her friends. The project swiftly moved beyond her own storehouse of knowledge—the thirty or so bands of her immediate circle—to include the additions of friends and then, via email, friends of friends who had heard about the project and wanted to contribute. Working with graphic designer Keith Whiteman, Ratner created a wall-sized version of the map
on durable vinyl, which she then took to festival events and galleries where members of
the audience were encouraged to make additions and amendments (Fig 5.6). Within two
years the map expanded from the first thirty bands that Ratner included to the 8 x 12 foot
network diagram of over 2,000 bands.33

Beside Ratner’s mural, the Experience Music Project has mounted its own interactive
version of the map that invites visitors to act on their own knowledge of band histories
and local scenes and, using the dry-erase markers provided, add to the store of shared
information. People looking at the map offer remarks about what they see or what they
notice is missing. They make mention of people they know and shows they’ve seen, and
some loudly proclaim their evaluations (‘awesome!’ ‘sucks!’), while others enter into
quieter conversations with their companions. Some also contribute to the community
installation in uninvited ways such as tagging or drawing sophomoric obscene pictures.

The Seattle Band Map installation stands out as an instance where we can see how a
low level of technology can still facilitate a high level of audience involvement. It also
makes evident the broad range of responses that a simple (analogue) interface can support,
including making a contribution, offering an evaluation, sharing knowledge verbally, and
subverting the framework of communication. Other aspects of the visitor’s involvement
may not be so visible but it is safe to assume that there is probably much going on that
simple observation cannot reveal. This is not, however, to suggest that media does not
have an important role in the forms of participation that characterise the contemporary
museum. Rather, beginning with analogue interactivity is meant to remind us that social
networks and social rituals of sharing existed before the internet and have continued
significance even in a museum such as the Experience Music Project which was
designed with the internet as its conceptual model: ‘non-hierarchical and multilayered
in nature, with “browser” capabilities for vast amounts of information available to all’
(Bruce 2006, 148).

33 Through collaboration with software developer Golf Sinteppadon, they then launched an online version in
February 2011 that grew from an archive of 2,000 bands to over 4,000 bands six months later (Garling 2011).
Looking at other opportunities for participation offered as part of the *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* exhibition, it is evident that even within media-enabled instances of participation, each is quite different from the others. With each invitation to participate there are a number of variables shaping the character and effects of that opportunity. In the context of the online ‘Share Your Nirvana Memorabilia’ Liveshare site, individuals are able to upload and annotate images of objects, drawings, and ephemera that they have collected and which hold personal significance for them. Contributions were made from fans from all over the world and from individuals of all ages. As a database of audience response, the dozens of online image postings clearly demonstrate the importance of emotional connection and self-expression as core fan values. At the same time, a small number of contributors demonstrated significant interest in the historical or prestige value of the objects they shared. The onsite video testimonials—which are created by audience members in a small video booth and then projected in an adjacent screening room—gravitate toward similar declarations about the personal significance of Nirvana. However, there is in this situation also an opportunity for more detailed and expressive storytelling that is not possible within the context of online image posting.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{34}\) The Liveshare platform no longer exists (Cooliris, the company that created it, having been bought by Yahoo) and with it any ‘archival’ value the project may have once had. This represents an instance in which the institutional challenge of digital sustainability could be considered.
Like interactivity, participation is a range of activities within a framework of sensory, semantic, and behavioural dimensions. It occurs at different scales within different technological and institutional contexts. In addition, each mode of participation differs in terms of its temporality (online uploading being almost instantaneous); its mediation by the institution (the onsite Share Your Nirvana being cached and curated by museum staff); and, perhaps most importantly, the way it organises the relationship of the individual to the community with which it dialogues.

However, what appears common to all the different modes of participation seen here is the way each suggests a sense of the audience’s co-ownership of the cultural narrative. The Seattle Band Map, Liveshare, and the onsite Share Your Nirvana all provide opportunities for the audience to share artefacts, opinions, knowledge, and experience with others and become part of the larger narrative about Nirvana and its impact (Fig. 5.8). These participatory components of the exhibition are embarked upon under the aegis of aggregating lived culture and helping to create a sense of community. Informal and transitory, each draws upon pre-existing attachments. Thus, it is not the objective of the museum to create community but rather for the exhibition to provide a context within which the values, interests, and experiences that constitute it are accurately reflected. Participation is not something that the popular music museum makes happen so much as it is something it recognises and reflects. And it is reflected at each level of the exhibition. The story of Nirvana is not just that of ‘three guys’ but of the hundreds of people involved in the Seattle music scene and is rooted in a decades-long history of a punk rock underground. The museum views the cultural narrative of this part of popular music history as belonging to the audience and encourages them to share their experience and find themselves within the narrative. The exhibition’s multimodal design invites visitors to engage the content in a self-determined fashion that allows them to co-author (through their individual assembly of it) their own version of the cultural narrative.

35 The selection and sequencing of the video clips are part of the ‘backend’ of the system that allows the institution to curate the user-generated content.
In making participation part of the exhibition, the museum communicates its recognition of the significance of cultural memory as something co-owned by the audience. By providing spaces in which members of the audience can contribute to the narrative, and perhaps also claim some measure of historical visibility, it affirms the importance of its audience as part of popular music history. Its participatory programmes reflect the museum’s efforts to make visible and sustain the network of relations that make popular music scenes or cultures possible and offers tacit acknowledgement that the expertise about popular music resides in far-flung and sometimes unexpected places—at times even beyond the existing knowledge of the curatorial staff of the museum. Participation is also significant because in it we can see the museum relinquishing some of its traditional power to exercise ‘a de facto monopoly over the constitution and mediation of public memory’ (Caron and Brown 2011) in favour of a more collaborative relationship with its audience. The Seattle Band Map, in particular, provides evidence of the museum’s willingness to let go of some of its authority and control and instead cultivate its ability to entertain the emergent and respond spontaneously to the delinquent or unruly.

5.4 Creating non-monumental cultural heritage

*Monumentality and its other*

From its beginning the Experience Music Project sought to distance itself from the history of the modern museum as a monumental social space. The key-frames guiding its transition to a space ‘beyond’ the familiar museum form included a disregard for any distinction between high and low culture; belief in the commercial viability of the museum; the desire to gain recognition for its founder, Paul Allen, as a visionary; the sense that the modern museum was unable to speak effectively or directly to a younger generation whose learning styles were shaped by multi-layered information technology; an interest in the influence of technology on museum experience; and the belief that cultural change emerged from within a ‘mainstream’ rather than an elite audience (Bruce 2006, 132–4). Not all of these points are directly relevant to our consideration.
of how the exhibition becomes a space in which to occasion heritage. However, they do all in some way speak to the idea of problematising the museum’s traditional monumentality in ways that prepare the way for the non-monumental, as does the museum’s choice of the word ‘project’ to describe its identity.

In this section we reveal how the exhibition experiments of the Experience Music Project produce a non-monumental space within which it shares the cultural narrative with its audience and creates an authentic ‘congregant space’. In order to develop this line of thinking we use Lefebvre’s notion of monumentality to demonstrate how the museum’s architecture, exhibitions, and information infrastructure (especially in its original design) establish the museum’s identity as a non-monumental institution. We then look at the context this creates for audience engagement, discovering how personal memories play a key role in the process by which popular music becomes cultural heritage.

According to Lefebvre, monumentality is a ‘singular spatial representation of collective identity’ that condenses ‘all aspects of spatiality’ (Lefebvre 1991, 220–1). He provides the example of the cathedral:

> the cathedral’s monumental space necessarily entails its supplying answers to all the questions that assail anyone who crosses the threshold (Lefebvre 1991, 220).

The monumentality of the cathedral promises to ‘transcend death’. However, its underlying assumption about how transitory reality contrasts with the monument’s imperishability (as a means to ‘transmute the fear of the passage of time, and anxiety about death’) ultimately proves to be illusory (Lefebvre 1991, 220). It absorbs all that is contentious in its ‘tranquil power and certitude’ and enacts a sort of ‘supercoding’ that lends a sense of ‘all-embracing…totality’ to the monument. Even though its ‘credibility is never total’ (221), the monument’s sense of universality is persuasive and appealing—and in this regard resembles hegemony.
Lefebvre goes on to qualify the notion of monumentality by pointing out several things it is not. ‘Monumental qualities are not solely plastic, not to be apprehended solely though looking’ (Lefebvre 1991, 225). In other words, the identity of the monument is not established according to scale or visual appearance.Monuments are not simply ‘collections of symbols’; neither ‘an object nor an aggregation of objects’ but assemblages that give direction at the affective level and to the body in a way that transforms it into a ‘property’ of monumental space. Simply put, the monumental space makes its occupants subjects of its perspective.

On the one hand, monumentality seems to possess some of the qualities of a powerful and well-designed exhibition: symbolic density, immersive experience, meaning that is irreducible to the things on display. On the other, it appears to be animated by an ominously oppressive sort of impulse. How do the Experience Music Project and its exhibitions appear under this lens? What is it that the Experience Music Project does or is that distances it from the history of the modern museum as a monumental social space?

The architecture of the Experience Music Project rejects monumentality in its relation to time and perishability, through its use of motion within its form and in the directions it provides the body. Architect Frank Gehry’s design for the Experience Music Project is easily misread as ‘monumental’ as a result of its dramatic sprawl. But scale and theatricality are not the features of monumentality as Lefebvre has described it. The shape of the museum and its external surfaces interact with the surrounding environment to create an undulating effect. It plays with the temporary effects of daylight and headlights in a way that makes the building’s geometry appear to refigure—an effect that is intensified when the building is observed from different perspectives. Its situation in relation to the adjacent public spaces and facilities creates a feeling of entanglement—most notably with the history of the site that once housed the Seattle World’s Fair. Internally, it is a disjunctive whole that permits overlap and interweaving of different types of spaces in a way that creates a casual coherence that stops short of totality or the ‘singular spatiality’ of the monument.
The interior space of the Experience Music Project, which is one of divergent symbolism and non-linear narratives, is similarly difficult to align with the ‘tranquil power and certitude’ of monumentality. As in other popular music museums, the narrative is told through a constantly shifting perspective in which artist, technology, industry, city, genre, scene, and fans frame the various ‘shots’ that are montaged to create the ‘story’ of rock ‘n’ roll. Indeed, rather than overcome ‘perishability’, it appears that the building has ingested the tempo and forms of attention that characterise its subject, bringing time into play and giving the space a syncopated or polyrhythmic feel. Thus, the variant rhythms that feature in a multimodal exhibition such as *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* resound within the museum as a whole.

And, as we saw in the last section, the Experience Music Project’s multimodal exhibitions, by anticipating the varied interests of the visitor and welcoming their participation, produce a space of co-creation rather than ‘singular spatial representation of collective identity’. This connects the museum to the everyday in which personal relations to popular music take shape and where the museum’s content will ultimately be put to personal use. Thus, it reverses the logic of monumentality and instead of turning the visitor’s body ‘into a property of monumental space’, turns the content of the museum into the ‘property’ of the transiting body.

Further, at the heart of the Experience Music Project’s identity is its enthusiastic use of computational technologies. While much has been made of the symbolic relation of Gehry’s design to a smashed guitar, Gehry’s use of advanced design technologies and materials that establish the non-monumental identity of the museum.\(^\text{36}\) For without the use of the CATIA aviation design computer system the construction of the museum—with its 280 individually shared steel I-beams—would have been impossible. The significance of computational technology in the process of building the museum was matched by the museum’s innovative integration of digital content both on-site and online—a

\(^{36}\) Gehry’s capacity for generating metaphor seems to provide each building with a memorable story of its inception in an inspiring observation.
topic we will explore in greater detail in the next chapter. By bringing artefacts from its collection online and using the Thinkmap® data animation and visualisation software as its interface, the museum created a fluid, user-navigated environment designed to generate networks of associated information. This customisable experience represented another way in which the Experience Music Project offered what at the time was a highly original means for establishing a conversation between museum and audience member. Integrating this digital system with the on-site exhibits, and allowing bookmarking for later review, meant that the museum was configured as ‘an open container’ (Andolesk and Freeman 2001) with its contents becoming distributed within everyday situations. Indeed, the visit was no longer conceived of as a discrete special occasion but came to include overlap with the spaces and temporalities of the everyday world to which the visitor returned.

Thus, the Experience Music Project’s use of digital technology enables it to treat the museum as a project space—an experiential, participatory, experimental, media-suffused spatiality. While its stated intentions might have been to distance itself from the monumentality of the conventional museum and ‘reinvent the museum, to bring it into the twenty-first century’ (Bruce 2006, 130), the successful design and development of a functioning prototype of a purpose-built visitor-centred popular culture museum actually creates awareness of how the museum is not just one thing, but something manifest in multiple forms. The museum cannot be reduced to either the rectilinear and columned neo-Classical edifice or the weightless volumes of the International-style white cube. What the non-monumentality of the Experience Music Project ultimately makes evident is that what is at its heart is what it holds in common with every other museum: a desire to provide a space for collective understanding.

Non-monumental conditions cultural heritage
One of the traditional functions of heritage is to establish connections with the past for the future. As we have seen (in Chapter 2), the definition of cultural heritage has been
far from static. It has evolved and expanded several times over the last fifty years in ways that indicate an increased awareness that human existence depends upon ideas, sensations, symbols, and rituals as much as it does on the materials it uses and produces. At the same time, it has offered increasing recognition for the role of personal memory in the process that is cultural heritage.

In an interview with curator Jasen Emmons, he talks about the shock of recognition that can occur when the audience encounters something with which they have a personal memory or connection.

There are people who will see that [poster for Nirvana’s first gig] and think: “Oh my god! I was there! I remember that show.” Those things really resonate for people and allow them to feel they have a place in history (2011).

While researchers in the area of popular music exhibitions (Kong 1999; Leonard 2010; Leonard and Knifton 2014) also remark on the significance of the self and the tendency of visitors to draw connections between things on display and their own lives, a detailed analysis of how the process of self-recognition operates and what it generates has yet to be developed. Perhaps by considering how personal memory and self-recognition occur within Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses we can make some contribution to the development of such an understanding.

The way the popular music exhibition speaks to personal memory determines its value as a site of cultural heritage. For it is in relation to personal memory that the individual finds connection with history and generates the ‘affiliative associations’ that enable us to align with others who are not part of our immediate interpersonal networks but are nevertheless part of our communal experience in the wider world (Gurian 2005, 76). When ‘visitors come to the museum to find themselves’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000, 9), they find not only a mirror of the self but also a shared history, and sometimes even a social network.
Self-recognition within the *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* exhibition is not simply coincidental with the content. As we have seen, every level of the exhibition is designed to encourage participation, allow self-directed exploration, and create moments of emotional and intellectual resonance. The opportunity for the audience to ‘find themselves’ can be seen in the exhibition design, in the stacked ‘meta-functions’, and in the content itself. The interactive Seattle Band Map and Share Your Nirvana exhibits provide the most obvious evidence of this, but self-recognition takes place at a number of levels. These include the routine memory work involved in moving back and forth between personal memory—‘I saw that’, I knew them’, ‘When that happened I was…’—and the common history evoked by the artefacts on display; the integration of personal memory as artefact of the music scene; and, through this, the creation of avenues for indirect identification with larger histories. By examining these we can come to see what is involved in making history available to the audience in a way that enables the identification and appropriation necessary to create cultural heritage.

By evoking personal memory, the exhibition creates the opportunity for its visitors to see themselves mirrored in the museum. The mirroring occurs when the visitor makes a direct identification with the contents and thus serves as the subject of the narrative (Witcomb 2003, 144). Through this process of ‘self-inscription’ the visitor both ‘finds’ his or herself and accesses the curator’s version of the part of popular music history represented by the exhibition in a way that brings it into the realm of the self (Witcomb 2003). Thus, the visitor is implicated in the content and encouraged to continue appropriating new information, experiences, and ideas. This process of self-recognition, which involves identification and projection, is in many senses routine memory work. However, it becomes a significant mechanism within the process of creating cultural heritage, when personal memory intersects with the exhibition narrative. Moreover, self-inscription is pluralizing.

The museum’s Oral History Project creates artefacts of personal memory. By including personal memory as an artefact, the exhibition creates a bridge between the individual
and the collectively remembered past which might otherwise seem remote or abstract. When curator Jacob McMurray began research for the Nirvana exhibition project, he started by interviewing a wide range of people connected with Nirvana and the Seattle music scene (McMurray and Novoselic 2011). According to Emmons: ‘This story was so close both geographically and in terms of its time period that people really felt they knew it and even owned it’, which made ‘getting it right’ imperative. Using existing interviews and adding a wide range of new voices—such as Chad Channing, the band’s first drummer, photographer Charles Peterson, and Megan Jasper, the Sub Pop employee famous for the Lexicon of Grunge hoax—the curator relied on the Oral History Project to ground the exhibition in social history.

The oral histories document the recollections of the people who participated in the music scene associated with the celebrated artists, but are usually left out of the canonical accounts of popular music history. These voices represent the scene and support the curator’s interpretation of that part of popular music history. By including them in the exhibition, the narrative is stretched to include a wider network in which other musicians creatively laboured as part of a largely invisible DIY fraternity that also included people involved in building the commercial infrastructure and community support systems of the scene: producers, people from the record label, fanzine publishers, graphic designers, music journalists, venue owners, and so on.

Most basically, using the oral histories that archive individual memory within the exhibition integrates their content within the collective history. But it also serves another function. Here, as in other museums, these documents are used to ground the exhibition in social history and manifest the museum’s interest in inclusiveness (Kavanagh 1996; Watson 2007). Like popular music oral histories such as Please Kill Me, Off the Record, and Yes Yes Y’All, the museum’s oral history artefacts are used not only to document popular music as a participatory culture but also to ensure musicians and fans have some control over the cultural narrative. Thus, oral history has emerged as one of the
most reliable ways to reframe the hegemonic accounts of popular music history so that
they comprise a broader range of experiences related to it (Leonard 2007).

When the museum validates the personal memories of non-famous participants in a
music scene, it provides the visitor with another point of identification. Those private,
personal memories, much like the visitor’s own, have now been joined with history.
Thus, as the visitor sees his or her reflection in the representation of a community that
takes shape in relation to popular music, a sense of their own identity as a subject of
history starts to become visible.

By creating avenues for indirect identification with other experiences, the exhibition
connects personal memory to larger histories. Through acts of self-recognition the visi-
tor enters into a ‘wider network of relations though which the past is remembered and
reconstructed’ (Keightley and Pickering 2006, 153).’ The direct appeal to social memory
draws the visitor inward, into the history told by Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses.
Once inside, the avenues of indirect identification open up as the visitor becomes
involved with the content through basic cognitive processes such as comparison, associ-
ation, grouping, apperception, recognition, listening, and selecting. Through these
activities their experience and personal memory become conjoined with the collective
public account of music history that the museum has staged. And in this we find an
image of non-monumental membership.

Opportunities for more complex involvements such as testifying in the ‘confession
booth’, documenting the visit with one’s own device, interpreting, and explaining to
others also exist within the exhibition context. These sorts of activities represent another
layer of involvement through which the visitor takes on the role of the active member or
agent of the historical narrative. What we see in the exhibitions of the Experience Music
Project is a progressive response to this complex situation. The museum understands the

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37 By multiplying the number of versions of events, oral history also highlights the centrality of interpretation in the
writing of history and hints at its inherent instability (de Groot 2009, 4).
variegated and layered character of both the historical phenomenon it represents and the visitors who are interested in it. But it also takes seriously its responsibility to thoughtfully configure that history for display in a manner that makes it publicly available to individuals from different communities and social groups, and does so in the spirit of inclusion and sharing.

The non-monumental exhibition practice of the Experience Music Project allows its visitors multiple points of entry into materials that can be either used to introduce the topic or mined by experts. It is not a product of the curatorial connoisseurship but it recognises the importance of the aficionado. It respects the novice without using them as a standard for what the museum shares. As Emmons explained in interview:

"It is so easy for exhibition research to go down the rabbit hole, focusing on interesting details that only the true aficionado would understand... But we want the exhibits to appeal to a broad audience so we have to find a balance and layer the information. If the visitor has no idea who Nirvana is they could come into the exhibit and understand who they are and how they developed and what their significance is. If the visitor is a huge Nirvana fan, they could still come away knowing something new they didn’t already know (Emmons 2011)."

In a sense, it represents a ‘middle ground between a narrative and a database’; it recommends several playlists but leaves the system open enough for the user to consider alternatives (Parr, van der Veen, and Van Horssen 2009, 35).

To summarise, what we have seen is how the Experience Music Project’s engagement of personal memory within the exhibition deftly connects it with the broader collective narrative by first providing opportunities for self-recognition, identification, and appropriation, as well as opportunities to connect self to others through projection, generalization, and abstraction. And how the museum recognises the role of personal memory
in the creation of heritage, drawing upon the techniques of the multimodal exhibition to create a non-monumental space in which ‘affiliative associations’ can exist independent of any single unifying culture or consciousness. As such, it provides a model of an exhibition practice that can speak to our interest in how the museum of the twenty-first century aligns its provision to accommodate the demands of today’s pluralistic and information-rich society.

5.5 Occasioning heritage in a congregant space

After having examined in such detail the psychological and social processes involved when the visitor connects personal memory with collective memory, we might be left wondering why it is so important that the museum exhibition be the site of this activity. Indeed, perhaps we might even be wondering why in an era of infinite online information a physical site is necessary at all. It is certainly true that the museum has no exclusive claim on being able to create a sense of social membership. Nor does it exercise exclusivity in terms of exhibition—society supports many forms of public display, from shop windows to sporting events. However, one of the things that museums are uniquely able to do is provide a congregant space in which the convergence of personal and collective memory occasions cultural heritage.

According to Elaine Heumann Gurian, a congregant space is a place ‘where it is safe to interact with strangers’ (2004, 6). It is one of three kinds of spaces that people need access to in order to maintain a peaceful society. (The other two are spaces for family and friends and places of work.) She lists various congregant spaces including malls, railway stations, beaches, restaurants, civic buildings, and places of worship and uses these to develop some suggestions about what the congregant spaces of the heritage sector—museums, libraries, concert halls, arenas, and zoos—might learn from these other types of spaces about facilitating pluralism and social inclusion. Thus, Heumann Gurian’s use of the term is not just descriptive but brings with it an inherent political gravity. Authentic congregant spaces are ones where strangers co-exist without enmity;
where the space appears to be un-owned or owned by everyone; and where the welcome promised to all remains uncompromised by stigma or condescension. As custodians of collective history, museums are places where the values of a society are renewed; they ‘authenticate the social contract’ (Gurian 1999, 182). What Heumann Gurian does not make explicit, but what should be mentioned here, is that the visibility of others is an important feature of congregant space.

Popular music culture has some obvious spaces of congregation—concert hall, disco, bar, and record store—but most are in some way territorialized, reflective of claims relating to subculture, race, age, or sexual orientation. As a result, such spaces are not authentic ‘congregant spaces’ as described by Heumann Gurian. Initially popular music was defined by the teen age of its primary market (throughout the 1940–60s); later, genre, style, and subculture became increasingly significant in terms of defining music culture (1970–90s); today, media platforms and related listening habits tend to minimise the significance of age and subculture as social thresholds are removed. Until the institutionalisation of music downloading rendered music acquisition and enjoyment a more or less private activity, popular music was not public in the sense used by Heumann Gurian. In fact, it might even appear that the popular music museum emerges as the various claims to cultural ownership within popular music culture began to recede (within the digital realm). Thus, the popular music museum, especially as shaped by the ‘prismatic’ exhibition methodology of the Experience Music Project, offers popular music culture a congregant space in which it becomes more fully public.

Looking at the issue of cultural heritage from the perspective of cultural policy and issues of national identity, cultural geographer Lily Kong notes that representations of the past need to enable identification in order to facilitate the inheritance of the collective memory at the core of cultural heritage (Kong 1999, 5–6). ‘When the past is collectively remembered, and collectively recognised as ‘belonging’ to a people, it becomes heritage’ (Kong 1999, 21).
Kong is concerned with what makes heritage authentic. Her case study focuses on the Singaporean government’s attempt to construct a history of popular music that can be promoted as heritage, but which proves largely unsuccessful. The collective recognition of something belonging to a people, she argues, cannot be constructed simply by collecting information. Such ‘a conscious reconstruction of the past’ is history rather than heritage (Kong 1999, 5). Kong’s subtle analysis underlines the importance of collective memory intersecting with personal memory, and the sense of possession surrounding cultural heritage. It is, according to analysis, the social character of collective memory that supports the realisation of heritage (Kong 1999, 4–5).

Further, sites of cultural heritage are places where collective memory is made available for transfer. A location becomes a site of cultural heritage when ‘cultural quests for identity and social pursuit of community’ can be inscribed there (Kong 1999, 2). Thus, a heritage site is not defined geographically but in cultural terms; it is a representational space understood in terms of collective memory. As we have demonstrated earlier, the mirroring done by the popular music museum enables the visitor to see their experience as part of a larger field—to both see the self and see beyond the self. It provides a context in which personal memory and collective memory intersect, and cultural heritage arises. Additionally, because it is possible to see how the popular music museum provides a transfer site for collective memory, we can recognise it as a site of cultural heritage.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered how the museum exhibition can serve as an authentic site of popular music cultural heritage by declining certain narrative conventions of exhibition practice and adopting, instead, multimodal forms of address that recognise the importance of identification and allow participatory engagement.

What the experiments undertaken within the popular music museum demonstrate is that the museum form is sufficiently flexible to allow quite dramatic reconfiguration of its
provision. As the Experience Music Project demonstrates, it is possible for highly interactive multimodal exhibitions to facilitate the sort of participation that makes the museum a cultural heritage site, one that realises the twenty-first century museum’s desire to act as an agent of democratic pluralism. It is also worth noting, however, that the Experience Music Project—a museum with a history as a virtual research lab for digital heritage experiments and an identity well suited to expression via technological metaphors—has highlighted for us the importance of actual social assembly, of authentic congregant space.

Heritage now includes an increasingly broad range of social practices, media, forms of expression, and cultures. Material artefacts mix with ‘intangibles’ within the museum, encouraging the museum to view its collections as ‘assets’. The processes of cultural inheritance take place in many different sorts of locations, including the staged environment of the exhibition. Visitation is reshaped by the interactive, network, and mobile technologies that museums once struggled to accommodate or integrate but now view as part of their infrastructure.
6.1 Introduction

In the two previous chapters we have argued that when popular music becomes the subject of the museum, its traditional provisions are reshaped through the process of accommodating popular music’s particular content and culture. The collection of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame demonstrates how the museum learns to value the mass-produced and the personal so that it can effectively engage the social imaginary of the audience of popular music. The Experience Music Project makes apparent how the museum employs a non-monumental, multimodal approach to exhibition, which encourages audience participation and identification, in order to establish the exhibition as a site of cultural heritage.

In this chapter, which begins with the British Music Experience as its central case study, the museum visit is the provision under consideration. Here it is observed that the popular music museum, having accepted that it cannot contain the visitor’s relationship to its subject within the space of the museum, uses network technology to extend the visit, making the museum accessible from within the everyday world of the visitor. As it engages the vernacular world of popular music, the museum encounters independent heritage initiatives and forms of ‘amateur expertise’ that co-exist alongside it within the online cultures of connectivity. This leads to a deeper reimagining of visitation that takes into account the importance of amateur expertise and the protocols of social media—sharing, exchange, and assistance—in order to characterize the visit as ‘distributive’.

In today’s networked world, the physical site visit is just one of many locations for the museum and audience encounter. In one summary:

Rather than being seen as a vessel in which people and things are gathered together in one place, the museum is set to evolve into an establishment
that distributes its contents outwards in all directions via digital formats (Harris 2013, 126).

This condition of the museum, which exists neither in a single physical location nor in a clearly bounded social or cultural space, has been characterised as a ‘distributive institution’ (Parry 2007; Proctor 2010; Harris 2013). In this chapter we examine how the British Music Experience’s extension of the visit creates a situation in which the museum can be imagined in fully distributive terms, engaging its audience in a more episodic fashion across the various platforms of the information networks that today form the dominant medium of communication. By introducing several independent popular music heritage initiatives to the discussion of the popular music museum, we fashion a view of the mediascape within which it operates. Thus, we are able to identify some of the limits of the special-occasion visit as well as some of the opportunities for collaboration that exist online.

This chapter is grounded in original empirical research acquired through interviews with museum professionals and online project curators, site visits, and online research, but it also draws extensively on the recently published body of research about popular music cultural heritage. The history and description of the British Music Experience is compiled from several sources and, as with the other case studies, creates an overview of the institution where none previously existed. For the presentations and discussions found on independent popular music cultural heritage sites, we have used ‘online observation analysis’ approach (Nørskov and Rask 2011; Hine 2000) in combination with interviews with the project curators.38

After providing a history of the British Music Experience, the chapter examines how the

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38 It might also be considered a form of virtual ethnography (Hine 2009), but of the passive rather than the actively engaged sort. Although discussions of methodology tend to favour the participant-observer approach to online community, because this research is not primarily about online behaviour it was decided that an overview of the activity along with the curator interviews would provide adequate detail.
museum’s RFID and bookmarking system, which allows the visitor to tag and further explore artefacts online after completing the onsite visit, relocates part of the museum to the everyday world of the visitor where cultural activities are routine rather than special occasions. It briefly discusses how this vernacular world of popular music culture evolved within pre-internet social networks and how the newer digital forms have mapped onto those networks, giving rise to cultural spaces within which independent heritage activities take shape. Because the British Music Experience closed, abruptly and virtually without warning, during the course of the research, the data available regarding its past and planned efforts to engage the online world of music fans is limited. Using three independent online music heritage projects—Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History, 1,000 Songs, and The Women’s Liberation Music Archive—as additional case studies, the chapter outlines some opportunities that are offered to the popular music museum on the shared terrain of the Internet.

The closure of the British Music Experience in April 2014 after a mere five years in existence reminds us that the agility of the museum of the twenty-first century depends upon not only cultural resources but financial and human resources as well. Even though this thesis is not centrally about institutional organisation or the business practices of the museum, it highlights the necessity of developing the museum mission at a scale appropriate to its resources as well as in a manner that establishes an authentic connection with its audience. The possibility that the British Music Experience may reopen at a future date allows an opportunity to use the findings of the research to identify some possible future directions for the museum’s life online. This is at a time when the network has become a given of popular music culture—as unremarkable as electricity or the telephone—and now informs both the ongoing creation of new forms of popular musical expression as well as the collection and interpretation of the musical past.
6.2 Background to the British Music Experience

Establishment

The British Music Experience was located in the O2 Arena in Greenwich, London, and was officially opened in March 2009 by the city’s mayor, Boris Johnson. The museum was established as a charitable trust supported by Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG), an international sports and entertainment presentation company which owns more than 100 venues worldwide, including the O2 Arena. The museum’s mission was to ‘advance the education and appreciation of the art, history, and science of music in Britain’. The initiative to create a British popular music museum was led by British music promoter Harvey Goldsmith, a person well known for both his success promoting tours for major popular music artists such as Bruce Springsteen, Diana Ross, and U2, and for his involvement in charities such as Live Aid and The Prince’s Trust. Early in the process of developing the museum, the UK copyright collection agency PRS for

39 AEG also provides financial support for the operation of the Grammy Museum in LA.
Music became a key sponsor along with Gibson Guitars and the audio company Sennheiser. Additional sponsorship for the museum came from consumer cooperative retailer The Co-operative. With considerable corporate support and a location adjacent to one of the largest and most successful performance venues in the country, the British Music Experience stood in contrast to the short-lived £15-million National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield, which was built with funding from the National Lottery and situated near Sheffield’s Hallam University, where it was intended to serve as the anchor for a new development zone.

The British Music Experience engaged American music historian and museum director Bob Santelli to advise on the development of the curatorial direction for the museum. Santelli had been the Vice President of Education and Public Programs at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame from 1993 until he became the CEO of the Experience Music Project in 2000. During the period in which he consulted on the new London museum, he was appointed Executive Director of the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles. Between 2007 and 2009, his considerable experience in the creation of popular music museums in the United States helped steer the creation of the British Music Experience. The museum was envisioned as a place that would use ‘cutting-edge audio-visual technology and a world-class archive of popular music with some of the most coveted music memorabilia of all time’ to advance its educational and entertainment goals. Curator Paul Lilley came to the museum from the EMI Group Archive Trust and was tasked with creating a museum that would have a distinct British take on the history of popular music. In his summary of the events leading up to the opening of the museum, Lilley pointed out that it was a process that began ‘without any artefacts at all’ and had to be realised on a very short timeline of just over two years (Lilley 2011).

From its inception, the British Music Experience was conceived of as a museum that would operate without government funding, through admissions, sponsorships, and music industry support. A charitable foundation with a board of trustees, the museum
also assembled a Management Board that included representatives from every facet of the music industry—including the British Photographic Industry (Geoff Taylor) and the PRS for Music (Emma Inston), music management (Bill Curbishley and Paul Loasby), and concert promotion (Rob Hallett, AEG Live). It was the opinion of Goldsmith that the problem with the National Music Centre in Sheffield was that ‘it bypassed the industry and as a result, nobody really understood what it was all about’ (Cunningham 2009). In addition to lending expertise and connections, the British Music Experience’s landlord AEG provided the museum with a £9.5-million ‘start up’ loan (Lilley 2011). The revenue model was similar to that of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Experience Music Project with an expectation that admissions would make up a significant portion of earned revenue.\footnote{At the RRHF 40% of earned revenue is from admissions; at the EMP it is 37% with government grants constituting 3% of the EMP’s revenue and between 6-9% at the RRHF.} Initial attendance estimates of 300,000 proved difficult to meet and, according to Lilley’s estimate, in 2010 the overall attendance figure was approximately 120,000 (Lilley 2012).

Not only was the museum’s organisational structure informed by the practices and standards of the music industry, but its underlying purpose also reflected certain interests of the industry. As Goldsmith indicated, the museum had a role to play in a post-digital renewal of the industry: ‘We need new, creative people to become part of the music business. And so alongside this experience being fun and interesting for fans who want to learn more about artists, we have a massive workshop programme which we hope will stimulate people to enjoy all facets of our industry, not just performance’ (Cunningham 2009).

Despite some characteristics that might have roused suspicion about its lack of autonomy or direct alignment with fan culture, the British Music Experience garnered favourable response when it first opened, most notably from Guardian music critic Paul Morley (2009).
Collections

The British Music Experience was predominantly an interactive museum but also displayed a number of star artefacts such as the David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust costume, Spice Girls outfits, Sex Pistols memorabilia (Fig. 6.2) and Noel Gallagher’s Union Jack guitar. At the time of the museum’s opening, the total value of the collection was estimated at £5 million, with the oldest item on display being ‘the trumpet played by Humphrey Lyttelton on VE Day in 1945’ and the newest the dress worn by Estelle at the 2008 MTV Awards (Cunningham 2009). The museum’s display cases contained conventional combinations of costumes, posters, record albums, handwritten set lists, and professional correspondence, however, the artefacts were accessible not only in the museum but also through an RFID and Smartcard technology system that allowed the visitor to tag and ‘collect’ them for further exploration online. While the public mission statement described the museum as ‘a world-class archive of popular music’, in a 2011 interview with curator Paul Lilley, he points out, ‘We started without any artefacts, pictures, or anything’, and goes on to relate that ‘all the memorabilia is lent to us by artists: we don’t own any of it.’ It is ‘mainly on loan from the artists, a few private collectors, and

Figure 6.2 Punk exhibit. Photograph by Marianna Alcorta.
the V&A lent us a few outfits’ (Lilley 2011). The extended loans made the artefacts available to the public but not necessarily the property of the museum. Thus, to speak of the British Music Experience as having the role of custodian of the popular music heritage is to note its actual legal status rather than using a metaphor to express its sense of public responsibility. The museum’s collection was, from the beginning, at ease with the properties of the virtual.

Unlike the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Experience Music Project, the British Music Experience began to develop the museum—its collection and its exhibits—without reference to specific material artefacts. It began with what it considered to be the essential stories of popular music in Britain and then set about acquiring the materials required to illustrate those stories. As Lilley recounts in interview: ‘With punk, it was just a case of approaching those artists and seeing what they had. Glen Matlock from the Sex Pistols loaned things for the exhibit and then through that we built a relationship which led to his doing a workshop at the museum’ (Lilley 2012). The collecting of physical artefacts was also informed by decisions about which stories lent themselves to the use of the display case. For Lilley, it was a question of ‘matching up the means of communication’. For instance, ‘punk is something that works very visually. There is a lot of great memorabilia for punk—ripped t-shirts, album designs, and other things that will work very well in a showcase’ (Lilley 2011). While the lack of physical assets might have seemed an obstacle to establishing a credible museum of popular music, Lilley took a different view: ‘As a new museum you have to engage yourself with community and the industry, which is actually better than if you had £50 million and went out and bought everything’ (Lilley 2011).

The interest in connecting with communities is also evident in the British Music Experience’s creation of a system to extend the visit. Like the Experience Music Project, the museum sought to make images of the artefacts and the information associated with them available to the visitor by remote access following their onsite visit. The tagging
system encouraged the visitor to personalise their experience in the museum and, in a sense, to ‘appropriate’ the information from within their everyday world beyond and after the special-occasion visit.

**Exhibitions**

The British Music Experience was defined by its interactives and with over one hundred screens was a luminous and constantly moving environment. The museum covered 22,000 square feet of space arrayed around a central area referred to as The Core. The Core was surrounded by display areas called Edge Zones (Fig. 6.3), which traced the decades through their predominant genres: skiffle, glam rock, punk, and so on. Smaller-sized interactives—such as the tables where oral history videos are used to create virtual ‘dinner parties’ where guests such as Eric Clapton and Keith Moon trade ideas about music history (Fig. 6.4) or the Atlantic Crossing interactive that made a game of competing
claims about the importance of music developments on either side of the ocean—were housed within the various galleries. Each Edge Zone also included a cascading information screen that provided the visitor with the opportunity to explore a chronologically organised database of information about the decade represented within that gallery.

The museum also included several larger-scale interactives such as the Dance the Decades exhibit (Fig. 6.4), which, after a short historical introduction and rehearsal, allowed the visitor to make a video recording themselves doing a dance (such as the twist, disco, or the locomotion) that could be watched in the museum or accessed from home using the SmartTicket. Other opportunities for active participation included the Gibson Interactive Studio, Hey DJ, Vocal Coach and Anatomy of a Pop Star exhibits and, to a lesser extent, the immersive exhibits such as the Pre-Show Orientation narrated by UK television presenter Lauren Laverne or The Finale immersive concert simulation which featured high-definition widescreens and state-of-the-art speakers and sound system. A key interactive in The Core was Where It’s At, a large horizontal map of the UK that visitors loom over and explore 4,000 pieces of music-related information connected to geographic locations using a trackball interface and an updatable back-end designed to allow updates and new information.

Each of the interactives was custom designed for the British Music Experience during the short two-year development period that Lilley described as an ‘industry time frame’. Santelli, Lilley, and music consultants Rob Dickins (former chairman of Warner Music UK), David Roberts (author of Rock Atlas: 700 Great Music Locations and the Fascinating Stories Behind Them), and Mark Ellen (broadcaster and editor at NME and Mojo) worked with four different design and software companies to determine which stories would employ which technologies (Lilley 2012). The project involved Land Design,

41 A few months after the museum’s opening, Ubisoft released the first edition of its rhythm game series Just Dance (which is now a cross platform release on Wii, Playstation and Xbox).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA5WVDfFuFU
which worked in collaboration with Studio Simple, iso design, and Clay Interactive to create the museum’s interactives, and coordinated their integration with the infrastructure provided by Sysco, a technical contractor with experience in the heritage sector. The development period also involved the immense task of licensing images from forty different picture libraries (such as Bettman, Getty, and the BBC as well as numerous individual photographers) and video footage from more than seventy sources (Lilley 2011).

Although largely defined by the interactives that constituted its permanent exhibition, the British Music Experience also hosted a programme of temporary exhibitions in a lower-level space. These exhibitions, in contrast, did not tend to rely primarily on interactives but on photographs, artefacts, and video documentation and were not connected to the Smartcard system. Noteworthy photography exhibitions included Daniel Kramer: Photographs of Bob Dylan (November 2012–February 2013) and Rip This Joint: The Rolling Stones 1972 (November 2012–February 2013), which featured the photographs of Jim Marshall (and was curated by Dave Brolan). The temporary exhibitions provided a platform for exhibitions whose subjects might not generate much interest outside the UK—for instance, Still in Love With You: The Phil Lynott Exhibition (April to June 2012)—but also presented touring exhibitions from the Grammy Museum such as Messenger: The Bob Marley Exhibition (July to October, 2012). The British Music Experience’s last temporary exhibition was another Grammy Museum touring exhibition, Taylor Swift: A Photo Experience (January to March 2014). Certain exhibitions, such as the one focusing on Swift and another about the band Bon Jovi, were presented in conjunction with stadium performances at the O2.

The permanent exhibits of the British Music Experience demonstrated a strong sense of the social context of popular music through its reference to social and political events related to important events in the history of music. ‘Memorabilia in the museum is displayed in genres that often had a youth movement that goes with it—e.g., trad jazz, New Romantics, punks’ (Lilley 2011). This social significance is most evident in the
display relating to punk rock. As Lilley asserts: ‘To tell the story of punk without telling the story of the three-day week or unemployment—it just doesn’t work. You have to put things in their context for them to make sense’ (Lilley 2011).

Recent Developments

On April 29, 2014 the British Music Experience announced it would be ‘closing the doors and moving on’ the following day: Wednesday, April 30, 2014. Visitors were informed that their online collections would no longer be available after that date and the website was shut down shortly afterward.42 A decision at AEG to withdraw its support left the museum without the ability to continue offering public programmes. The £9.5 million that AEG put into the project was an investment rather than a gift (Lilley 2011). Financial information from Charity Choice indicates a difficult but steadily improving financial picture for the British Music Experience (Fig. 6.5), raising questions about why AEG, a company estimated to be worth $8 billion, recalled the museum’s loan. Though the announcement of the museum’s closure indicated that it would reappear in a new location at an unspecified future date, no subsequent information has been released to the public as of August 2015.43

![Five year financial information](image)

**Figure 6.5** British Music Experience five-year financial information. Source: Charity Choice.

42 Sometime between May 20, 2014 and August 20, 2015 the museum’s press release was removed.
43 On September 10, 2015 it was announced that the museum would be reopening in Liverpool in the Cunard Building in spring 2016.
What remains of the British Music Experience is essentially a digital afterimage that exists on social media. A Wikipedia entry mentions the 2014 closing but largely consists of information and references from the first year of the museum’s operation. The British Music Experience’s Facebook page, which has over 14,000 page likes, archives many of the museum’s master-classes (with artists such as Imogen Heap, Rudimental, and Bashy), exhibitions, readings, and opening events, and includes twenty-three pictures documenting the interior of the museum, along with the museum’s farewell message (in the About section). The last few messages posted in May 2014 made reference to the museum staff doing annual condition reports and include images of some notable artefacts, such as Kate Bush’s red ballet shoes and a 1963 Christmas greeting from the Beatles to their fans. The invitation to social media followers to comment on the objects, despite the circumstances, conveyed a sense of an ongoing project which was reinforced by a claim on the museum’s Facebook page that it was ‘not dead yet’ but simply ‘looking for a new home’. (Interestingly, the page continues to acquire new page likes at a rate of about ten per week.) The museum’s Flickr site remains online with twenty-six albums comprising 428 photos of events, exhibitions, and the venue at the O2. These have received 132,228 views. In the days before the final Facebook postings by the museum, over eighty images of past events were uploaded to Flickr—an indication, perhaps, of some staff member’s awareness of the precariousness of the institution’s legacy and sense of responsibility for maintaining some form of public visibility. Activity on the museum’s Twitter account also ceased in late May 2014, but it too provides a kind of quasi-official archive of seventy-six photos and 3,545 tweets. Ten videos promoting the opening of the British Music Experience and its educational programmes, as well as documentation of several artist’s talks, remain on the museum’s YouTube site (which had 174 subscribers and 79,589 views).44

These online traces are all that remain of the British Music Experience for the public—a patchwork of information about a major heritage project that ultimately proved unable to

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44 Figures as of August 17, 2015.
successfully realise its projected commercial potential. When the British Music Experience last posted on Facebook, it did so by thanking ‘friends at The O2 and to you, the public, who truly taught us that the real history of modern Britain is written in its music’. Its farewell promised its return, asserted the importance of popular music within the nation’s history, and framed the relation of institution and audience as one of reciprocity.

6.3 Extending the visit and embracing the vernacular

The British Music Experience was conceived, designed, and opened in the years following the turn of the millennium. At that time, the internet was being embraced throughout the museum world as a means for providing opportunities to extend the visit beyond the walls of the museum. The much-discussed impact of the digital as ‘a displacement of the spatial architectonics defining the threshold and interiority of the museum’, allowed for the introduction of ideas about visitation that were no longer centred exclusively on the venue but extended beyond it in both time and space (Parry 2007, 92–94). Like many museums, the British Music Experience used the internet to make the content of its collections and sometimes also its exhibitions available in a manner that was conceived of as extending its reach. Initially the digital augmentation of the visit was viewed as providing opportunities for anticipatory and reflective activities surrounding the site visit (Semper and Spasojevic 2002) without disturbing the centrality of the museum.

Because the notion of the extended visit took shape alongside discussions of the visitor-centred and inclusive museum, it shared in the more general interest in increasing public accessibility. Although initial conversations about digital heritage may have started with or focused on technology rather than beginning with such an explicitly critical position on the museum’s social mission, much of its terminology (such as access, self-directed, user-friendly, inclusive, and participatory) proved resonant with those making the more explicitly political assertions within the museum world (Sandell 2006; Golding 2009; Janes 2009; Phillips 2011). In the second era of the network these lines of inquiry

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45 Some BME.com pages can be accessed via The Wayback Machine but it is debatable as to whether that is visible.
became more fully integrated, as focus shifted away from access to a dynamic user model characterised by sharing and increasingly taking into consideration issues of social inclusion from the point of view of audience engagement. Thus, as the arrival, disruptive effects, institutionalisation, and ‘normalisation’ of the digital and network technologies (Parry 2015) retooled both structures of communication and prevailing cultural paradigms, the issues raised by these transformations brought questions of the social purpose of the museum to the fore of discussions about digital heritage and the museum’s use of ‘new’ media technologies. It was into this context of rapid change—of both technology and museum values—that the British Music Experience was born and developed its particular version of the extended visit. As a popular music museum, the British Music Experience’s extended visit was shaped by two influences that were decisive for it but were probably not significant across the museum sector. One important influence would have been the precedent-setting experiments of the Experience Music Project; the other was the character of the vernacular cultures of popular music into which the extended visit inserts the museum.

Figure 6.6 Experience Music Project MEG system. Source: Steve Bull.

**Extended visitation: landmark projects**

The British Music Experience’s SmartTicket extends the museum visit by using an RFID tagging system that allows the visitor to ‘collect’ and further explore artefacts online after completing the onsite visit. The SmartTicket system (Fig. 6.7), created by

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46 RFID technology allows identification and capture but is not strictly speaking ‘tagging’ or ‘bookmarking’ in the sense the term is employed within a social media context.
Production Science for Land Design, mirrors the basic functionality of the Experience Music Project’s Museum Exhibit Guide (MEG), which was in use at the museum from 2000 until 2005 (Fig. 6.6). Both systems allow visitors to tag items that are on display and ‘retrieve’ them later by accessing an individual account on the museum’s website. A digital image of the item along with its catalogue information provided the visitor with a selective (but potentially comprehensive) personalised representation of their onsite visit. Research on the nature of the ‘post-visit’ use of the museum websites of these two museums is limited, but documentation of the design of the Experience Music Project’s landmark integration of the exhibit guide with the database (Andolsek and Freedman 2001; Maguire et al. 2005) helps clarify the expectations as to use.

Figure 6.7 British Music Experience SmartTicket system. Source: Sara Fiorino.

As an exhibition guide, the MEG supplemented the artefact labels of the museum exhibits with six gigabytes (20 hours) of broadcast-quality audio and video content (Andolsek and Freeman 2001). Accessing items within the Experience Music Project’s Digital Collection online provided visitors with the opportunity to review this material and discover additional descriptive text, interviews, and links to external content (Fig. 6.6). The MEG provided visitors with ‘tools to build their own pathways’ (Parry 2008, 180) as well as ‘drillable’ follow-up opportunities in which visitors could undertake a focused and concentrated exploration of content (Jenkins and Ford 2013). The Experience Music Project’s use of the 2,500 custom hardware devices, which required daily maintenance
to transfer visitor data to the website, update content, clean, and recharge (Andolsek and Freeman 2001), was discontinued in 2005. The museum’s Chief Technology Officer, Forrest Gibson, pointed out that the advent of smartphones and cloud computing made the museum’s expensive IT infrastructure an unnecessary burden, particularly when other entities (such as Google) might ‘do the heavy lifting’ (2011).

Unlike the MEG, the British Music Experience’s SmartTicket (Fig. 6.7) did not involve the use of hardware devices loaned to the individual visitor. Instead, it integrated the tagging technology with the admission ticket in a way that not only increased ease of use but also decreased the maintenance load of the infrastructure of the extended visit. Though the internal elements of the systems of the two museums operate in a similar fashion, the significance of the shift from purpose-built museum property to an individually possessed souvenir represents a further extension of the visit and integration of the museum into the visitor’s everyday world. The SmartTicket serves as a keepsake or souvenir of the onsite visit that ends up in the home of the visitor—on his or her desk, in a wallet, file, or drawer. It enables the visitor to retrieve content that is stored on a password protected page (myBME) of the museum’s website and thus supports a personalized experience of the museum. The size, portability, and familiar interface of the smart card has the advantage of maintaining the sociality characteristic of the traditional visit by freeing individuals from devices that obstruct casual interaction with companions. Additionally, recorded performances, made in the Dance the Decades or Sennheiser Vocal Booth, offer both the option of collection within myBME or sharing through social media channels. However, once the visitor ‘returns home’, the personal collection ceases to accommodate what have become the routine forms of sociality within the everyday and instead acts as a kind of storage locker.

**Extended visitation: evaluated**

The British Music Experience’s use of technology is designed to enrich individual visitor experience by sustaining a relationship with museum content over time and at a
distance. The language used by the museum (on the website and in the print pamphlet) refers to the visitor ‘taking home’ content to retrieve and re-engage with it: ‘experience it again and again’. The visual vocabulary of the SmartTicket mirrors that of the customer loyalty card, suggesting a preferential relationship. While this creates a sense of ongoing association and identification, it assumes a one-to-one relationship between visitor and museum. The way in which it extends the visit communicates the museum’s interest in individual membership more clearly than its interest in community. The exhibition content that the visitor ‘collects’ and later accesses is not integrated with options for sharing. Thus, in conceptualising the extended visit in terms of the individual, the museum overlooks the existing online habits of its audience that could further extend the museum through the network.

The individual visitor’s cache of collected content exists online but is not, strictly speaking, conceived in terms of the network relations upon which the more common ‘web behaviours’ that relate to finding information and casual browsing are based. The SmartTicket does not provide or link to additional information or interpretive materials, nor does it provide tools for familiar collection activities such as sorting, comparing, or creating displays. In the terms associated with the discussion of transmedia experience, it is neither optimised for ‘spreadability’, ‘drillability’ (Jenkins and Ford 2013), nor user-generation of content (Kidd 2014). The extended visit, it seems, is conceived of in terms of the museum as content provider rather than primarily in terms of the visitor as a content user or socially engaged actor. The extended visit is not designed according to a dynamic user model or as a dialogic communication system.

The motivations for the museum in this regard are likely informed by the challenge of reconciling copyright concerns with the cultures of connectivity that subvert such legal ownership regimes. Nevertheless, the effect of this in the context of the vernacular

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47 The plastic credit card size of the SmartTicket does not use the more common swipe technology but is perforated so that it might be attached to a lanyard.
culture of popular music is seriously inhibiting and runs the risk of undermining the museum’s attempts to align with the culture it seeks to represent.

And yet, despite these shortcomings, British Music Experience curator Paul Lilley noted in interview that approximately one-third of museum visitors use the ticket to access content stored on the museum’s servers, besting many other take-up rates for personal museum collections online (Marty 2011). Having produced a version of the visit that no longer focuses exclusively on the venue, the museum increasingly becomes a multi-channel, de-centred, and disaggregated service’ (Parry 2008, 183).

However, having followed the visitor home, the museum reconnects with its visitor in a context where the special-occasion quality of the museum site visit dissolves within the world of everyday media use, a context in which participation and sharing have eclipsed access as the prevailing logic. Revisiting the content from within a local context extends the visit but it also inserts the museum into a complex and rapidly changing mediascape where it is but one of several channels of communication.

The extended visit recognises the value the museum’s content has away from its ‘home’ location. It also recognises the importance of establishing ways for the visitor to create or strengthen identification with the institution. However, the notion of the ‘extended visit’ also makes visible several challenges the museum faces. First, there is always the challenge of absorbing the costs of creating a custom platform for extending the visit and allowing increased access to the museum’s collections. Second, there is the challenge of compatibility with other systems and platforms, which has both technological aspects relating to interoperability as well as cultural aspects that result in specific platforms being associated with specific demographics and types of use.48 Another, directly related challenge can be seen in the disjunction between the traditionally slow rate of change

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48 Institutions may recognise the appeal of being platform-agnostic but audiences, on the whole, are platform-devoted.
characteristic of the museum and the rapid rate of change of digital technology.\textsuperscript{49} In the case of the Experience Music Project, the MEG handset seemed cumbersome and redundant as smartphones became near universal amongst its audience and made the points of information access almost ubiquitous. Even though the British Music Experience was established at a later date and could take the development of the smartphone into account, it still faced the challenge of adapting to the social effects of the use of mobile technology and the conceptual shift from access to exchange precipitated by the introduction of ‘social media’ platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The British Music Experience’s SmartTicket, although better suited to the era of the mobile and the personal defined by the smartphone than the MEG, was nonetheless misdirected in its conceptualisation of loyalty. The card suggested a loyalty to the museum but the online experience is defined by the collection, and, even more narrowly, by the parts of the collection previously encountered. Thus, the notion of the extended visit fails to take into account that the individual’s identity is fluid rather than fixed, that they are a visitor at the museum but become a ‘user’ when relocated to the home, library, café, or bus where they access their personal collection at the British Music Experience. Consequently, the museum misrecognised the nature of the visitor’s affinity as essentially re-collective rather than exploratory and constructive.

\textit{Entering the transmedia terrain}

The relocation of the museum afforded by the extended visit brings it into the realm of the vernacular culture of popular music, where it exists alongside numerous other independent heritage initiatives. As a culture born of media, popular music has frequently served as a laboratory for innovation and adaptation: technological, aesthetic, and social. In recent years, popular music culture has renegotiated the terms of its identity in ways that align the vernacular with wide area networks, patterns of consumption that are increasingly omnivorous, and relations to its own history that increasingly recognise

\textsuperscript{49} A 2014 Consumer Electronics Association study indicates the expected lifespan of various products ranges from four to seven years.
(and grapple with) its importance as cultural heritage. In this section, we examine how the transmedia character of the vernacular cultures of popular music challenge the popular music museum to continue to reimagine visitation so that it might support a whole dynamic array of collaborative relations with its audiences as they shift roles from visitors to user, from stranger to member, from learner to expert.

The British Music Experience’s use of network media to extend the visit distributes it in such a way that it comes into direct contact with vernacular aspects of popular music culture and becomes ‘transmedial’. As the museum opens itself up to the distributions of the network, the special-occasion character of the onsite visit becomes entangled with the everyday, on-demand character of life online. This not only redefines the museum’s relationship with its audience, it relocates the museum within the broader mediascape where it exists alongside independent heritage initiatives.

Transmedia is a term routinely coupled with the word ‘storytelling’ and associated with the design and delivery of content across several media (Jenkins 2006; Laurel 2014). However, the agency of users in assembling content within their own specific circumstances and in relation to their own preferences is equally important (Kidd 2014). Lev Manovich’s groundbreaking reflections on the formal properties of new media pointed out that the ‘computer layer’ made modularity, variability, and transcoding new media’s basic properties (Manovich 2001, 46). As such, it sets the stage for the development of the kinds of culture within which the visitor, spectator, or consumer is transformed into the interactive ‘user’. In the years since the publication of Manovich’s research, the ‘culture layer’ that exists atop the ‘computer layer’ has increasingly become identified with the user’s capacity to manipulate and make content and has emerged as the subject of a broader discussion of user-generated content (van Dijck 2009) as well as a more specific conversation that connects the concept directly to the museum (Proctor 2011; Simon 2010; Kidd 2011). Thus, ‘transmedia’ has become less about the distribution of content through multiple channels and more about the context into which that content
is received and the reception and reuse of the content. Jenny Kidd, who applies Henry Jenkins’s term ‘transmedia’ directly to the museum world, provides this useful summary of what it involves:

Transmedia storytelling broadly relates to the extension of narrative across multiple platforms, and the implication of a ‘user’ in calling that narrative forth from a multitude of entry points—in diverse spaces and in varying states of ‘completion’ (Kidd 2013, 23).

Given that the extended visit relocates the museum narrative, making it part of a transmedia experience—entangled with the multi-channel, on-demand everyday world of its audience—it is reasonable to expect that any unified or authoritative account of the British music experience promoted by the museum will be made relative. The content that the museum makes accessible to the visitor has changed both context and platform. What was once on-site is now online; what was once special-occasion now appears within the everyday. Within the new context, significance is modulated and remade by the ‘user’, according to his or her needs within that context. The visitor switches frames and becomes the ‘user’, and this results in shifts in the significance of the content.

For instance, on the desktop computer the artefacts tagged at the British Music Experience appear alongside windows filled with other information that might be related (complementary, supplementary, or conflicting) or entirely unrelated. The image of David Bowie’s knitted Aztec print Ziggy Stardust jumpsuit and leggings outfit, exhibited at the British Museum Experience, can be directly compared with the equally famous asymmetrical knit costume by Kansai Yamamoto, the Bowie artefacts in the collection of the V&A, and ‘fact checked’ against the David Bowie is Mistaken Facebook fan page, dedicated to pointing out any misidentifications, misattributions, and misinterpretations in the V&A’s touring David Bowie Is exhibition. On the mobile screen the artefact appears in unexpected contexts; it enters into conversations, is exchanged between friends, and is put to use for purposes that cannot be anticipated (Fig. 6.8). The extended
visit blurs the temporal as well as the spatial boundaries of the museum (Kidd 2014, 27), establishing the possibility of all-hours or continuous ‘visits’.

The popular music museum that embraces the idea of the extended visit quickly finds itself integrated within a context filled with other digital activity (Parry and Sawyer 2005). By seeking to extend its reach, the museum finds itself becoming transmedial—even if this is not its explicit intention. Consequently, we can see there is more at stake for the museum in the term transmedia than just the creation of content for distribution across platforms; there is also the challenge of developing a strategy for situating itself within the new mediascape where clear distinctions between the museum and other cultural activities come into question. In the case of the popular music museum, the extension of the visit entangles it with the everyday and brings it into a context where it is but one of several heritage initiatives at play. The extended visit relocates the museum into a context where it no longer has ‘de facto monopoly over the constitution and mediation of public memory’ (Caron and Brown 2011, 5).

Three key attributes of popular music inform its heritage practices: its relation to the communications and social networks that form its infrastructure; a long-standing history of being constituted through participation; and its deep connections with personal
experience, feeling, and memory. As noted in Chapter 2, popular music culture has been sustained by overlapping communications networks and social networks (Connell and Gibson 2003) and has increasingly found itself integrated with other creative industries such as film, television, fashion, and gaming (Aslinger 2008; Miller 2012). It was also noted that audience formations, which have been a central theoretical consideration for popular music studies since its inception, have been evolving over the last two decades in order to account for changes resulting from the integration of digital, network, and mobile media (Bull 2008; Kot 2009; Sterne 2012). As a result, they are being theorised in ways that have shifted away from the Birmingham School’s model of class-inflected music subcultures toward new frameworks for analysis—such as scene, milieu, and network—which are meant to better reflect the condition of culture in the post-industrial era (Webb 2007; Huq 2006; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015). Additionally, Chapter 2 offered a summary of some of the reflections on the performative and participatory aspects of the social experience of popular music (Crafts, Cavicchi, and Keil 1993; Torino 2008; Henriques 2011). What such an overview makes evident is that transmedial characteristics have been visible within popular music culture for some time, and have even appeared as subjects for research and theoretical reflection within popular music studies. Thus, the vernacular culture of popular music, it might be suggested, is naturally pre-disposed toward operating within the transmedia landscape. And, further, given popular music culture’s ready alignment with transmedia, then perhaps the popular music museum might also possess a similar capacity for agile adaptation.

6.4 Encountering independent heritage and embracing amateur expertise
When the museum extends the visit, it enters the terrain of lived culture where it encounters the independent heritage activities that exist within the culture at large. In this section we look at three independent popular music heritage projects, summarising their significance and identifying their limitations as sites of public memory. We look at them in terms of the personal motivations that ground them, the sense of historical or community responsibility that attends their maintenance, and the decision-making
process that informs the choice of platform. We draw upon existing research in the area of independent and DIY popular music culture heritage (Cohen and Roberts 2014; van Dijck 2013; Collins and Long 2014; Baker 2015) to frame the relation of independent heritage to the museum and conclude by advancing the idea that the extended visit has set the stage for the museum formulating a model of adaptive collaboration which values ‘distributed expertise’ and makes use of the museum’s credibility as a custodial institution. This model represents a future direction for a museum such as the British Music Experience which has already extended the visit and opened the door to the potential of the distributive.

Independent popular music heritage: three projects

Three independent popular music heritage projects are discussed in this section: 1000 Songs, a public group on Facebook; Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History; and The Women’s Liberation Music Archive. The framework of each is distinct, as are their understandings of popular music history, their platform, the opportunities for participation they offer, and their relation to established memory institutions. The differences in structure and significance of the examples used here reflect the unevenness of the independent heritage terrain and highlight the need for the transmedia museum to develop strategies that take into account the influence of the media platform on social formations as it moves from extended to distributed visitation. They have been selected to represent the broader mediascape and the potential it represents for the museum because each constitutes a substantial popular music archive, reflects an interest in popular music heritage, and had an identifiable and accessible curator who was interested in contributing to the research. Together, they allow comparisons and provide insights into how heritage online that would allow the popular music museum to enhance its distributive potential.50

1000 Songs is a public group on Facebook founded and administered by Jim Shedden, a filmmaker and curator who works as the Manager of Publishing at the Art Gallery of

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50 The projects were not involved in any actual collaborations with the British Music Experience.
Ontario (AGO). The project began on May 30, 2011 with the final song being posted on February 7, 2014. It was born of Shedden’s ‘love of lists’ and was part of a process of recovery from alcoholism, which Shedden refers to directly and openly in interview (Shedden 2015). During its active publication phase, several postings appeared most weeks, giving the project a dependable but slightly irregular rhythm. Although the project is complete, the Facebook page remains online and is host to intermittent ongoing activity such as additional song posts, news about participants, and memorials for some of the artists included in the list. Each entry featured a 1,000 to 1,500-word essay by the curator, a series of comments on the song being added to the list, and a link to a playable version of that song, usually on YouTube. The group has 637 members with an active core of about seven commenters.

*Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History* uses the popular blogging content management system Wordpress to support the social history research project of Toronto DJ and music journalist Denise Benson. The project began in 2011 as a series of articles for a local arts and entertainment weekly but after that publication’s demise, the content migrated to a blog and a Facebook page. The Facebook page was ‘liked’ by 2,016 people. Both platforms allow comments and receive several for each post, with the blog often featuring more content-rich comments supplementing Benson’s reports with additional information. *Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History* also occasionally connects to other independent heritage initiatives (such as The Flyer Vault on Instagram), digitally presents material artefacts related to Toronto club history, and makes available club mix sound files. In 2015 Benson used the online archive as the basis for a book documenting forty-eight clubs that existed in Toronto between 1975 and 2015.

*The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* was founded by Frankie Green and Dr. Deborah Withers and launched online in May 2011. The project used Wordpress to archive and make available oral history excerpts, photos, sound files (via Soundcloud), fliers, digitized ephemera, and short biographies of artists and bands. Comments express appreciation
and occasionally offer additional information about the content of the site but feature no significant community conversation. The archive was used to create *Music and Liberation*, a touring exhibition curated by Withers which was presented in Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow, and London. In its eighteen months of existence as an online archive, the site had ‘over 45,000 unique visitors’ (Withers 2014, 694). In 2013 *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* made the University of Bristol’s Special Collections the permanent home for the seven boxes of physical materials it had collected. While it continues to exist online as a blog, there is a low level of activity in terms of new postings, events, additions, or commentary.

Current research reveals ‘a diverse ecology of institutions with changing rationales for preservation’ (Brandellero et al. 2014, 220). Many independent heritage activities are labours of love rooted in the personal reasons, impulses, and desires found in other sorts of ‘ordinary collecting’ discussed in the literature on contemporary collecting (Pearce 1998; Belk 1995; Martin 1999). For instance, *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* founder Deborah Withers began her project in 2007 when she came across a cache of recordings by women musicians in the Feminist Archive South in the Bristol public library (Withers 2014, 694). There were no facilities for playback, so the vinyl records and tapes had slumbered for several decades, unheard but also undamaged. Addressing the marginalisation of women’s contribution to alternative music history, establishing the visibility of the history of women’s liberation music, and exploring the possibility of using a digital platform to ‘re-enact’ this history were key motivations for its founder (Withers 2014).

Each of the three online projects has a different value in relation to popular music cultural heritage, which is shaped by the origins and curatorial focus of the project, conceptual framework, media platform, the degree of self-consciousness about creating heritage, and the time and effort invested. The significance of *1000 Songs* in terms of cultural heritage is threefold: it aggregates information about specific songs (relating to their
creation, circulation and impact), it serves as a document of a particular ‘rock geek’ culture, and it incidentally provides details about patterns of consumption, local institutions, and the evolution of scenes through interpersonal relations and shared taste. The group offered a space for discussion more fully conversational than what has become the prevailing online norm. For instance, as a set-up for a broader discussion about the importance of Burt Bacharach in pop music, Shedden begins entry #52: ‘Ike Turner’s passing got me thinking about Isaac Hayes’. He talks about Hayes’s 1969 version of ‘Walk on By’, a song originally written by Bacharach and Hal David for Dionne Warwick and released in 1964. Five hundred and sixty-one words later, Shedden has mentioned thirteen other cover versions of the song, three in which it has been sampled, and provided a list of his fifteen favourite Bacharach songs. Three members of the Facebook group offer 2,597 words of self-described ‘record collecting geekness’, personal reminiscences and aesthetic evaluation of various versions of ‘Walk on By’ as well as Bacharach’s importance to the 1970s. The focus on the music and its evaluation—what popular culture scholars might identify as processes of ‘taste discrimination’ (Fiske 1992, Shuker 2010)—occasionally veers off on tangents but always begins with or returns to specific songs. Another example of a productive tangent occurs in relation to Sam Cooke’s ‘A Change is Gonna Come’, which serves as a platform for a discussion on the eve of Barak Obama’s 2012 run for re-election, while other postings lead to discussions about record stores in the GTA or the under-researched significance of television variety shows on popular music.

The quality of this conversation is noteworthy in several ways. The loquaciousness of the participants is one, and their willingness to engage in an extended series of exchanges that sometimes modify their perspective or position is another. Both stand in contrast to the more familiar ‘like’ and ‘link’ patterns of online sociability. Another metaphor offered by Shedden is that 1000 Songs is like visiting a collector’s house where they pull out favourite records to play and discuss (2015).
Although the core members were often familiar to one another in other social contexts, not all of the 1000 Songs followers were friends already. In fact, Shedden recalls there were ‘people I actually didn’t like but got to know through 1000 Songs, I now consider them friends. I guess things that bugged me about them disappeared.’ This is evidence that the platform possesses the potential to transform relations. The speaking community is rather small—with most followers lurking rather than posting—and the active members form a fairly homogenous group, in terms of some of the more obvious identity markers of age, race, gender, and sexuality. The interesting possibility that this might correlate with the anomalous intensity of the conversation is a question impossible to determine here but nevertheless worth noting.

In contrast, Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History is explicitly intended to compile a local history. Its mission is to bring to the surface the details of lived history and personal memory with expressions of musical taste and specific songs being secondary. Each entry is compiled by Benson, who draws upon between nine and twelve individual interviews for each 4,000- to 6,000-word account of a specific club. In addition to the oral history materials, the profiles include photographs documenting buildings, people, and artefacts, and in several instances mp3 files of club mixes. Sources of the photographs include the individuals who are their subjects, some club photographers, the City of Toronto Archives, and the Gay and Lesbian Archives.

Participation through the posting of comments on the Wordpress site is more broad-based but briefer than is the case with 1000 Songs. The comments are often a paragraph or two long, with about fifteen to thirty individuals commenting on each entry. The conversational back and forth that characterises 1000 Songs does not occur here, but there are significant additions of information—including personal recollections, images of ephemera, and details about the people involved and the broader historical context—offered by those who follow the project. On the Facebook page there are the more familiar short expressions of approval, likes and shares.
Each of the curators had a strong sense of responsibility to their source communities, even though the nature of that responsibility is quite varied. For Benson, representing diversity is important: ‘These clubs were people’s lives … I had my perspective but mine was only one story’ (Benson 2015). So too is the loss of the diversity that once characterised Toronto’s nightlife. In launching the book publicly, she draws attention to the impact of condo development on the city’s heritage, showing pictures of the recently erected condos, which she notes occupy most of the forty-eight sites. For Shedden, his sense of responsibility was ‘to be honest and authentic in my expression’, a value framework that speaks to both individuality and community membership.

**Independent popular music heritage: research frameworks**

As the role of ordinary people and communities in establishing the value of popular music heritage continues to grow, a number of scholars have offered frameworks for analysing this phenomenon (Bennett 2009; Baker and Huber 2013; Cohen and Roberts 2014; Collins 2015). These frameworks help us develop an understanding of the relation of the popular music museum to the independent heritage efforts such as *1000 Songs*, *Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History*, and *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* that populate the mediascape into which the museum inserts itself through the extended visit. One of the key issues to which they draw our attention is how authority and legitimacy are established and exercised within a heritage field that now includes independent initiatives.

According to Andy Bennett, the efforts of DIY preservationists who ‘dig below accepted terrains’ and expose ‘lost and forgotten’ artists and cultures are important as a way to ‘rewrite conventional histories of rock culture’ (Bennett 2015, 9). The significance of contesting canonical representations of music history with ‘DIY definitions’ (Baker 2015, 475) applies unequally to these examples. *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* does indeed question the marginalisation of a strain of women’s music history directly aligned with lesbian identity, and explicitly contests canonical versions of music history.
within which women’s music such as that which the archive represents has been denied visibility because of its ‘ephemerality, unknown and non-commercial nature’ (Withers 2014, 690). Withers writes that the project involves the ‘resurfacing of marginal cultural histories within the present moment’ (Ibid., 88). However, it is important to note the celebratory aspect implicit in securing recognition for a history of sisterhood and solidarity (Withers 2014b, 126). Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History demonstrates a similar interest in recovering a specific music history but it is not conventional rock history that produces its disappearance; rather, it is, according to Benson, ‘condo development [which] produces an erasure of urban history’ (Benson 2015). The conversations within 1000 Songs grapple explicitly with the questions of the rock canon, definitions of popular music, and conventional rock histories, but not in opposition to the music industry, nor in relation to any specific cultural alternative. Participants in the community of 1000 Songs use it to engage in the creation of ‘taste distinctions’ in ways that confirm Roy Shuker’s findings about the historically contingent practices of collecting in which personal memory, community connections, and canonical frameworks frequently converge (Shuker 2010, 83–109).

Emphasising the collaborative and activist aspects of community-based public history projects, Jez Collins draws upon scholarly work in the fields of history and archival science (Zinn 1977) to establish a new term to complement the widely used acronym DIY. In order to capture the expansion of the spirit of ‘do-it-yourself’ online, Collins proposes the term ‘doing-it-together’, or DIT. While each of the three examples discussed here can be characterised by its strong sense of community, their varying relations to the term and different internal structures suggest the need to situate the DIT framework within a broader continuum. 1000 Songs gives rise to an online community characterised by thoughtful, playful, and richly detailed exchanges; however, that community has little that would identify it as either activist or collaborative. As mentioned, the approach to music is more omnivorous than oppositional, more about sharing and self-expression
than rectifying any particular historical oversight. Furthermore, initial efforts to employ a collaborative curatorial model were rejected by the community in favour of leaving selection entirely in the hands of Shedden. Both *Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History* and *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* are also characterised by centralised curatorial guidance, even while sharing in part in the activist impulse that Bennett and Collins emphasise.

The research of Sarah Baker and Alison Huber (2013) focuses directly on the DIY ethos of volunteer fan archives but does so without directly aligning political significance and non-canonical preference. Instead, they analyse how such projects meet the challenges of heritage management—creating appropriate organisational structures, adopting professional standards for conservation and archiving, and securing the financial and human resources necessary to ensure sustainability—and examine the kinds of social interaction that are involved when a collection becomes a collective concern. Their approach is distinct from Collins’s or Bennett’s in that they see the political significance of the DIY amateur archive as rooted in its forms of participation and the local impact of the music or musician, whether its focus is Elvis or the Dirty Dozen Jazz Band. Although Baker and Huber’s archives are primarily about material collections rather than online presence, their recognition of the vernacular expertise regarding popular music that ‘amateurs in heritage management’ bring to the task of archiving (Baker and Huber 2013, 121) are equally applicable to the examples of independent online archiving being considered here. In fact, in the case of *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive*, the online aspect of the archive maintains its independence and control of digital assets after having given over the material collection to the heritage management professionals of the University of Bristol Special Collections library.

Beginning with the recognition that both heritage and popular music are complex phenomena, Les Roberts and Sara Cohen (2014) draw upon the work of Laurajane Smith (2006) to outline a critical framework for discussing popular music cultural heritage.
They make a distinction between what they identify as ‘Big H’ heritage (or heritage-as-object) and ‘Little h’ heritage (or heritage-as-praxis) and then use this distinction to establish the context for three forms of heritage: official, self-authorised, and unauthorised. This framework is developed in reference to how self-authorising initiatives such as the Heritage Foundation, Music Heritage UK and the Performing Right Society’s (PRS) Heritage Award seek to establish the value of popular music heritage within the tourism industry, and the official English Heritage’s relative disinterest in popular music cultural heritage. It also points out how unauthorised heritage-as-praxis exists in an ambivalent relation to ‘a musical praxis that is rooted in the sociality and culture of everyday life’, often ‘without an awareness that it is heritage’ (Roberts and Cohen 2014, 256–7). Thus, the framework makes apparent the persistence of issues of legitimacy and authority that must be negotiated by the various heritage initiatives. At the same time, it introduces the possibility that some practices that might seem to call authorised heritage into question are conceived according to other sorts of needs and narratives. Within the online community of 1000 Songs, for instance, we can see the negotiations of legitimacy occurring in decidedly unofficial but also non-oppositional ways. In this context, the recognition of the rock canon occurs and is referenced without becoming the central axis of difference. Participants are neither magnetically attracted nor repelled by it but use it as a jumping-off point for discussion and to gather and exchange their opinions and memories. Further, with respect to the curator’s authority within the project, it is evident that the members’ rejection of the open invitation to the membership to initiate song postings—and preference for the curator’s leadership—highlights the complex nature of authority and legitimacy within such online popular music heritage groups.

**Independent popular music heritage: findings**

What these theoretical frameworks help make apparent is the importance of the questions of legitimacy and authority that surround popular music cultural heritage. As Marion Leonard has pointed out in reference to the independent archives currently reshaping of
the terrain of heritage, although they may be exercising a transformative effect, ‘they have not necessarily been conceived in opposition to existing heritage institutions’ (Leonard and Knifton 2014, 21). By placing independent initiatives in opposition to institutional efforts to establish popular music as cultural heritage, they tend to overlook the internal operations through which the legitimacy of what we might call ‘heritage-at-large’ is established and negotiated. Indeed, the legitimacy of the curators working within source communities are from the perspective of the popular music museum especially instructive in terms of understanding its own role within the world of heritage-at-large.

The relations of legitimacy within social media rest less on stabilising institutional factors (such as credentials and positions of prestige, hierarchical authority, legal regulations of identity, and monopoly) than on still emerging, and often under-theorized, criteria such as approval, popularity, timeliness or speed, and selfhood. Jenny Kidd’s report on the related concept of authenticity is resonant here: ‘Authenticity has been relocated to the site of the individual, their truth and interpretation having an increased legitimacy and currency as the real’ (Kidd 2014, 67). However, the relevance of the message to the individual either as user or community member, lurker or active participant, cannot be entirely detached from the source of the message. Online attention follows what appears significant, and this significance can either issue from within the world of social media or derive from ‘external worlds’. When we compare various initiatives with the field of heritage-at-large, we find a graveyard of incomplete and abandoned archives which contrast with the examples used here. With regard to this difference, both Shedden and Benson mention the sense of community surrounding the project as incentive to continue even when time and energy were tight and other aspects of life needed attention.

The public profile of each of the curators outside the realm of social media lends legitimacy to the projects. All three curators blend professional expertise with that based on fandom: Shedden brings his experience as a documentary filmmaker and publisher to his project; Benson has twenty-five years of experience as a DJ, journalist and broad-
caster; and Withers is an academic with a PhD in Gender and Cultural Theory (Swansea University) focusing on Kate Bush. As types of legitimacy and authority established both inside and outside the specific online context of the archiving project, these are difficult to explain according to the terms outlined within the more general frameworks. Notwithstanding their collective lack of training in the heritage field, in addition to benefiting from the enthusiasm of the curator, each project also benefits from its curator’s considerable cultural capital and expertise. Moreover, the project aims and the curator’s expertise often ‘closely align with the statements of purpose of more traditional heritage organisations in that they have a broad mission to create and maintain collections and make them publicly accessible’ (Leonard and Knifton 2014, 21). Consequently, the creators and communities of independent heritage initiatives can be seen as ideal collaborators for the popular music museum.

Another, somewhat surprising, factor at play in the success of these initiatives is that they were or became projects with parameters or limits that made them manageable and gave them some sense of attainable objective. One thousand songs was an ambitious but conceivable number, ‘arbitrary but then very real’, which allowed Shedden enough conceptual space to ‘talk about music without everything having to be the greatest’ (2015). The initial parameters of Withers’s project were provided by the collection of recordings held by the Feminist Archive South in the local library system (Withers 2014, 694), and when it went online as The Women’s Liberation Music Archive it became (and remains) an archive of ‘feminist music-making in the UK and Ireland in the 1970s and 80s. Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History archived the history of defunct dance clubs in Toronto that operated between 1970 and 2015.

What projects such as 1000 Songs, Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History and The Women’s Liberation Music Archive make evident is the work-in-progress nature of the research in the area of independent popular music heritage online. The frameworks developing within popular music studies represent an important first step in understanding
and theorising about popular music cultural heritage. However, a more holistic model is needed to explain how the different forms of legitimation associated with heritage, popular music, and online media intersect and inform one another. While it is impossible to fashion such a model here, it nonetheless remains possible to use the case studies under discussion to further clarify the position of the popular music museum in relation to the heritage at large with which it co-exists within the broader mediascape that envelops the museum and which it enters via the extended visit. Before proceeding with the concluding discussion of how visitation can be transformed by embracing independent heritage and the amateur expertise found within, a summary of our findings thus far seems in order.

Several observations about how social media inform content curation, community participation, and the ways in which significance and legitimacy are established emerge from our examination of independent heritage projects. Network and social media make it possible to have independent online archives that represent, create, and document music culture and its communities. The sense of membership in these communities, to a large extent, rests on having a context for sharing knowledge and memories and contributing to the historical narrative, but it does not seem to be contingent on having direct influence on the curatorial programme.

The passion and knowledge of the curator, which can sometimes be verified by his or her reputation beyond the media platform, seems to play a role in securing the significance of the initiative—as does his or her ability to align the curatorial voice with the needs of the community and recognise the archive as a collective effort. Curators assume they share expertise with their followers and recognise local protocols, but they initiate the project and demonstrate leadership in terms of how it develops. Community response ratifies the project’s relevance and lends a sense of purpose to the initiative. Personal desire, commitment, and stamina ensure the growth of the archive is ongoing, but parameters that set its limits seem to be important to its vitality—consistency seems
to relate to the possibility of completion. It would also appear that the curator’s ability to establish a ‘succession plan’ plays an important role in securing ongoing significance for the independent heritage initiative.

Further, the nature of heritage at large is that it not only constructs a history of women’s liberation music, an inventory of venues or record stores, a city’s nightlife, or an account of the evolution of a musical genre, it also records the discussion of those subjects and so becomes itself a document of intangible heritage, an archive of affect connected to popular music. Such social traces constitute a ‘meta’ level that is likely to become more significant, and more visible, over time.

6.5 Collaborating with cultures of connectivity and the distributive visit

As a result of the emergence of the cultures of connectivity from within the digital revolution, museum visitation is no longer exclusively a special-occasion, on-site event. Museums today connect with audiences through several media, across a number of platforms. As a result, the place-bound notion of the visit becomes just one of several possible options for connecting with the content of the institution. Museums, which were once ‘condensed and consciously framed spatial demonstrations of knowledge’ (Parry 2007, 89), are no longer synonymous with the physical location of their building(s). Such sites continue to be of central importance (especially in relation to the collection and exhibition of material artefacts) and even intensify and increase in value as places of public congregation, ritual encounter with material culture, and convivial sociability. However, the site visit is now a specific rather than a generic description of this provision of the museum.

Museum media was initially used to make the museum more accessible to the public and thus expand its audience. Being the central source of heritage within the public realm, the museum naturally viewed media as a means to enlarge its audience reach and sphere of influence (Fairclough 2012; Parry 2007). Within a decade of the first efforts
by museums to establish a connection to their audience via the World Wide Web, ‘social media’ hastily reconfigured the internet through an explosion of participation. For the popular music museum, this has meant the extended visit brings it into direct contact with the vernacular world of popular music cultures. And when it enters this terrain, the popular music museum encounters the substantial amounts of independent heritage activity that have become part of the daily experience of culture (Fairclough 2012, xvi).

While independent popular music heritage is not necessarily ‘conceived in opposition to existing heritage institutions’, it can nevertheless prove ‘challenging to mainstream views of heritage’ (Leonard and Knifton 2014). But such challenges are also opportunities for innovation, and this is what concerns us in the final section(s) of this chapter. Having examined several independent heritage initiatives such as the popular music museum might encounter within the vernacular realm of popular music culture, we can see both the possibility of a deeper reimagining of visitation in which it operates in a ‘distributive’ manner, and the possibility of the popular music museum using the cultures of connectivity to enter into meaningful, effective, and respectful collaborations. As these examples vividly demonstrate, the museum’s embrace of the protocols of the vernacular culture—especially those of the cultures of connectivity, with their strong affinity for sharing, exchange, and assistance—can help establish processes for recognising and aligning with the ‘amateur expertise’ that characterises the independent heritage initiatives of popular music cultures.

Protocols of vernacular cultures: sharing, exchange, and assistance

Popular music heritage at large is visible within the vernacular world of popular music but also simultaneously exists within the vernacular culture of social media. Some of the protocols of popular music culture have been made visible in the previous discussion of independent heritage initiatives. The rapid growth of ‘platformed sociality’ has made detailed critical analysis of the specific structure of each platform and the form of sociality that co-evolves with it difficult to generate (van Dijck 2013). However, several
generalisations about the norms or protocols of social media proved helpful for understanding the relationship of the popular music museum with its audience. As Angelina Russo points out in reference to the contemporary social media context:

> It becomes increasingly important to structure the relationship between audience and institutions in ways that can meet the audience expectations while remaining true to museum missions (Russo 2012, 149).

As the popular music museum reimagines visitation in distributive terms, it is challenged to find its own effective and purposeful relation to the practices of sharing, exchange, and assistance that characterise the vernacular world of cultures of connectivity.

Independent heritage initiatives using social media platforms are routinely characterised by sharing. The curators share what they have discovered, their evaluations, opinions, pleasures, and struggles, or their sense of necessity, and in turn their followers reciprocate with their knowledge, memories, and the attention that affirms the appeal of what has been shared. There is both vulnerability and generosity inherent in such gestures, but both possess the potential to be dignified by the emergence of a sense of community. For the museum, the vulnerabilities associated with sharing have more to do with assumptions about scarcity creating value and the intellectual property rights that create legal obstacles to spontaneous sharing. In this regard, there can be moments in which mismatch characterises the relation between the museum and heritage at large or the online visitor (Kidd 2011). But even when museums are unable to share some of the assets of their collections because of copyright restrictions, documentation of material culture often remains unconstrained by copyright and thus available for sharing. Moreover, the expertise of curators and other staff, an equally important asset of the museum, can be distributed through various media channels. Although there are several notable museums that have embraced content sharing (Library of Congress, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Getty and more recently The Warhol Museum), at the British
Music Experience the shared content evident in its digital afterimage primarily consists of event documentation and offers only limited access to its collections. Noticeably absent from discussions about the museum’s relation to cultures of connectivity are thoughts about active question-seeking by the museum on platforms other than its own—a scenario in which the distributive visit would include the possibility of the museum being the visitor.

File sharing has also played a crucial role in the rise of cultures of connectivity, and especially in the world of popular music, where it has established the conditions in which ‘music is like water’ (Pareles 2002). It is worth noting that the precursors to social media were the peer-to-peer file-sharing services, such as Napster, invented by music fans and that those services that followed in the wake of Napster’s demise, such as Gnutella and Kazaa, created a method of exchange that avoided any centralised database and instead made a swarm of anonymous files (Sterne 2012). As a result, the logic of the vault seen in the British Music Experience’s extension of the visit via the Smartcard seems out of sync with the prevailing ethos of music culture and would warrant rethinking as distributive visitation takes shape.

Exchange is equally important as a feature of the cultures of connectivity relating to both digital assets and, less technically, to routines of online engagement and recognition (through comments, likes, shares, etc.). Within the context of the distributive visit the notion of exchanges takes on another connotation: one relating to the museum’s unique capacities with regard to securing longevity and stability. The immediacy, responsiveness, and local expertise evident in independent popular music heritage projects found online is difficult for the museum to match. Through collaborative involvement, however, the popular music museum is able to partake of the findings and insights of DIY source communities. Such exchange has been far from unprecedented, with the British Music Experience having sought collaboration with fans and fan clubs to develop exhibitions about Dusty Springfield and The Jam (Lilley 2011), and other institutions such as the
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and Macclesfield Silk Museum supporting exhibitions such as *Home of Metal* (2012) and *Unknown Pleasures* (2010) for which independent heritage practitioners ‘contributed content and expertise and influenced exhibition outcomes’ (Leonard and Knifton 2014, 19). Such collaborations benefit from representatives of the museum cultivating online relationships that acknowledge the knowledge and concern of the ‘embedded’ heritage practitioners. They serve as a reminder that museum learning is a two-way street and offer a model for museum research consistent with the expanded notion of heritage which recognises the importance of not only material culture but intangible cultural heritage as well.

The museum has long held a role in providing learning assistance to educators, self-directed learners, and researchers, and in the past the popular music museum has been recognised for the excellence of its networked learning programmes.51 Thus, the popular music museum possesses enormous potential to provide both practical assistance in developing educational programmes that use the assets of the independent heritage initiatives, and conceptual assistance in addressing the engaging problem of situating specific cultural activities within broader historical frameworks. For instance, while many of the entries for artists included in *The Women’s Liberation Music Archive* are richly documented and link to other resources (in the descriptive text, comments, or acknowledgements), the archive does not offer a comprehensive set of links to other related projects. Creating research guides that compile and evaluate resources is, in most cases, beyond the scope of those independent heritage projects that most frequently focus on a specific genre, locale, or era. The popular music museum, on the other hand, has or can access the professional skills and resources to assist the communities it reaches and becomes involved with online. Of course, supporting heritage learning in this way could be flagged as belonging to the domain of libraries and archives; however,

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51 RRHF National Teacher’s Choice Award and Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) award for its distance learning programs; EMP won a Webby Award and American Association of Museums Gold Muse Award; BMX Special Commendation Award at European Museum of the Year Awards 2011.
any sharp distinction between museum and libraries and archives is already being blurred by institutions such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the British Library, as well as by online information systems.\textsuperscript{52}

Further assistance and distribution of knowledge could be provided by the popular music museum through the training of community or public archivists who, like those trained in archeology by organisations such as the US National Parks Service or the Council for British Archeology, become familiar with professional standards and information structures and thus serve to anticipate and enable future collaborations. Of course, even offers of assistance require careful consideration of their appropriateness for the source community (Srinivasan et al. 2010; Glass 2014) and their compatibility with the easily accessed communication platforms that make social media so conducive to spontaneity, content generation, and accessibility of network distributions (Proctor 2012). Working in cross-cultural contexts (whether the cultures are based on musical affiliation, ethnicity, or type of organisation) can only help the museum develop its agility and its capacity to discern the opportunities to reshape its provision in ways that enhance its mission.

6.6 Conclusion

The twenty-first-century museum’s place within the contemporary mediasphere makes visitation a relation rather than a special occasion. It is a relation that connects it with the vernacular and the amateur expertise that flourishes beyond the walls of the museum within the cultures of connectivity. It is a relation that requires the museum to reconsider traditional notions of authority, legitimacy, and expertise—not because the institution needs to renounce these but in order to understand their broader distribution and the museum’s place within it. Distributive visitation demonstrates how authority, legitimacy, and expertise also exist, albeit differently configured, in the non-institutional spaces of

\textsuperscript{52} The recent rapidly expanding use of the term ‘curator’ is an excellent indicator of how the information explosion intensifies the need for trustworthy filters. To paraphrase Clay Shirky: there is no information overload except where there is filter failure. And the curator and librarian continue to be trusted ‘filters’.
independent heritage where they are subject to negotiations of remarkable, cloudlike complexity. Moreover, it situates the museum in relation to these ‘others’ in ways that undercut any monopolistic thinking. Neither institution nor independent initiative has a monopoly over heritage, and thus the possibilities for reciprocity and exchange become more pronounced when the visit is conceived of in distributive terms.

Beyond its own walls, the museum is as likely to be the visitor as the host of the visit. This requires a different attitude and approach than might be routine for an institution used to operating as a collective entity that absorbs the personal identity of its members in the ‘brand’. As a visitor, the museum, especially the popular music museum, must be sensitive to the unwritten rules of the given social situation. In some cases this might involve enabling representatives to speak more personally and reducing their obligation to represent the brand. It can also involve adjusting familiar production timeframes and workflow processes to other cultures or customs. But it must certainly also recognise the effects of the unevenness of a relation between an established institution and a volunteer-run organization—both in terms of structure and norms—and adjust expectations and demands accordingly. Simply put, the distributive visit requires that the museum appreciate and not take advantage of the hospitality of the source community.

In the culture of connectivity the rates of change require the museum to develop approaches that are not traditionally associated with heritage institutions—approaches that allow for rapid re-visioning and reconfiguration and can identify unworkable initiatives to be put aside. Such an approach is more experimental than many institutions can or want to accommodate but for the popular music museum it is very much in keeping with its history of cultural innovation, a history that has been driven by the powerful possibilities of new technologies (the electric guitar, the amplifier, synthesizer, sampler, mp3, etc.) and the constitutive tension between the commercial and the creative.

Finally, when the visit is seen as a relation it helps highlight the core activities of the museum and validate its purpose and enduring significance. What this is not is the
accumulation of things or information in a manner that assumes public good can be met by some abstract concept of collective property ownership. Rather, it is the purpose of the museum to play an active role in evaluating the quality of what is held in trust and used to represent the past to future generations, something that it cannot do without the help of source communities.

The museum also finds enduring purpose in ensuring longevity—not only of things but also of ideas, cultural legacies, and even more abstract concepts like our sense of historical time. The museum’s purpose in terms of crafting and caring for the conceptual frameworks that connect personal memory to shared narratives can be easy to overlook but can hardly be overestimated. As the custodian of the trans-individual account of the lived experience of others, the museum has an important role to play in relation to a society where collective action and experience are routinely devalued by crisis, competition, and the reification of human life and labour. Because the decentralizing processes of the distributive visit put the museum in direct contact with the places where culture is made, used, and treasured, it is through it that both the need and the reach of such frameworks become fully evident. The museum’s willingness and capacity to understand itself in relation to others, and to co-exist and collaborate with strangers, provides a model of what is involved in making democracy manifest. Thus, it is in its nurturing of democracy that the museum’s most fundamental purpose is made evident.
Chapter 7  Conclusion: A new vocabulary for the mediated museum

7.1 Introduction

This investigation of the popular music museum began with the assumption that the museum’s traditional concepts of collection, exhibition, and visitation might require refashioning in order to accommodate the relatively new subject of popular music. It was argued that, despite the need for adjustment, popular music is not essentially incompatible with the museum so long as the defining features of popular music and its cultures are taken into account when integrating new content to the existing museum format. The thesis analysed how the popular music museum declines certain conventions of materiality, space, and audience in order to align its provision with the culture it represents—a culture born of commerce and technology which nevertheless possesses deep and resoundingly personal significance for many people and has influenced shared values and shaped communities, subcultures, and sometimes even entire societies. It examined how the museum struggled to integrate popular culture within its value framework, often leaving important aspects of its meaning and materials in the margins. It observed tensions between the museum and popular music culture regarding pluralism and ownership of the cultural narrative, and surveyed the changing mediascape within which independent heritage initiatives take shape online, outside the museum. And it noted the intractable problem of how to integrate popular music’s central artefact, the song, into the framework of an institution historically defined as a visual medium.

In the course of this investigation it became evident that the power of popular music culture, significantly, rests on the media through which it is constituted. And that as a consequence of its subject possessing a multimodal and media-born character, the popular music museum necessarily becomes a point of media convergence. The central role of media in popular music’s reshaping of museum provision speaks to a wider dialogue about the relation of museums and media, and it is to this topic that we return in the
concluding paragraphs of this thesis with a proposal for a new vocabulary for museum provision based on terminology borrowed from computation. This proposal is one of the original contributions made by this thesis along with the interdisciplinary analytic frameworks produced for each of the three provisions and the case studies themselves.

7.2 Summary and findings

Three purpose-built popular music museums—the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland), the Experience Music Project (Seattle) and the British Music Experience (London)—formed the basis for the research, with each serving as a case study of how the popular music museum reframes the core provision of the museum.

Chapter 4 focused on how value is configured within the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s collection, and found that the value of its artefacts rests upon their ability to engage the social imaginary of a culture directly informed by celebrity and personal memory. The museum’s framework was found to be able to integrate the value of mass-produced objects (e.g. Run-D.M.C.’s Adidas) with more conventional standards of value where rare or representative objects (e.g. Jimi Hendrix’s handwritten lyrics for ‘Purple Haze’) have primacy. We saw how, in order to secure this synthesis, the popular music museum declined the high culture/low culture rhetoric upon which many distinctions in the cultural realm have hinged, and aligned itself instead with the surrounding collecting cultures that had already evolved processes of evaluation and served as custodians of popular music’s cultural heritage. Within this chapter we developed a model of relational value that drew upon and revised diagrams developed by Susan Pearce, Kevin Moore, and James Clifford. Additionally, our analysis of the collecting practices of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame demonstrated how it was possible to integrate the affective dimensions of popular music culture associated with celebrity and personal memory into its field of value as part of its intangible cultural heritage.

The Experience Music Project provided the second case study in which an analysis of Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses demonstrated how an exhibition might serve as a
congregant space in which to occasion heritage. Through this case study it became apparent that in order to align the exhibition provision with the defining features of popular music, the museum needed to decline the conventions of linear storytelling along with any assumption that museum space is inherently monumental. To facilitate forms of engagement resonant with music culture and recognise the audience’s co-ownership of the cultural narrative, *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* employed a multi-modal, non-monumental curatorial approach. An in-depth exhibition analysis made it apparent that this approach relinquishes some of the traditional power of the museum to control the historical narrative and exercise ‘a de facto monopoly over the constitution and mediation of public memory’ (Caron and Brown 2011). Instead, the exhibition invited the visitor to engage the content in a self-determined fashion that allowed them to co-author the cultural narrative—through forms of participation such as remembering, witnessing, and editing. Informed by the foundational work of Lily Kong on popular music and the heritage process, and Elaine Heumann Gurian on the museum as congregant space, the research made evident that the popular music museum’s re-framing of the exhibition provision could provide a platform for the audience ‘to inhabit the content’ (Bruce 2006) and become part of the larger story. Thus, we were able to see how an exhibition, despite being a staged situation, is able to serve as an authentically congregant space in which inheritance of collective memory can occur.

If *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* serves as the exemplar of what is possible when the adaptation of the provision is successful, the third case study offers an illustration of what might be interpreted as a partial process of adaptation. In Chapter 6, the British Music Experience is seen to decline the special occasion and geographically constrained definition of visitation, electing instead to extend the visit via the internet. The analysis concluded that this refashioning of visitation, by relocating the museum within the realms of everyday life where it co-exists with other media, forefronts the museum’s identity as an information resource and transforms its audience into what interactive
media calls ‘users’. Moreover, it found that the extended visit, intentionally or not, pushed the museum into the realm of the distributive, where its provision comes to co-exist within the broad and complex landscape of networked media. We could also see how the popular music museum encounters, and is challenged by, the independent heritage initiatives and forms of amateur expertise that exist within the cultures of connectivity that constitute such an important part of the contemporary mediascape. Through a detailed examination of several other sites of popular music cultural heritage within that realm, it was possible to identify certain practices that characterise the vernacular world of the cultures of connectivity—practices of sharing, exchange, and assistance—which challenge the logic of the extended visit by calling into question the presupposition that the museum is the central and primary source of information for its users. The chapter concluded by identifying several ways the museum could establish its own effective and purposeful relation to the practices of sharing, exchange, and assistance. And the argument was put forth that to do so not only allowed for a deeper reimagining of visitation as a relation but also enabled the creation of a model of adaptive collaboration that could draw upon the museum’s credibility as a custodial institution and recognise the source community as the museum’s partner in the creation of public memory.

Together, the three case studies demonstrated how the popular music museum affirms the value of the mass-produced artefact and the affective power of personal memory; how it employs the multimodal techniques that enable it to create non-monumental exhibitions that occasion heritage; and how it embraces the embedded vernacular knowledge and amateur expertise which exist within its source communities. In each instance, the provision has been examined in terms of its adaptation to the culture it seeks to represent but below the surface is an assumption that the popular music museum’s understanding of the visitor-centered museum of the new millennium is in sync with a more general consensus within the contemporary museum sector that visitor-centredness expresses values related to pluralism and social inclusion. In general terms,
this holds true; however, the research also exposed some frictions pertaining to audience identifications with popular music which sometimes operate in an exclusionary fashion (as in the debates surrounding the induction of hip-hop artists into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) and industry- or patron-centred agendas, which sometimes dictate the shape of the museum’s narrative.

The significance of media for the popular music museum was made manifest throughout the research, influencing the shape of each provision. As a culture that evolves in relation to commercial products that are created within recording technologies and distributed through mass and niche media channels to audiences that are formed through its consumption, media plays a constitutive role within popular music culture. Consequently, media appeared as a significant force within each process of reframing. And, because of the slow zoom structure of this thesis, it was made visible at every scale at which the museum articulates its purpose—from individual artefact to entire collection, from exhibit to exhibition to entire information ecosystem. The impacts of changing media formats, usage patterns, and cultural norms were made especially visible in the research into the landmark MEG and SmartTicket projects of the Experience Music Project and the British Music Experience discussed in Chapter 6. But such changes are also central to questions of how the collection and exhibition of popular music are organised within the museum. The research suggested that while the information infrastructure of the collection (database, indexing, archive) possessed an elasticity that could readily accommodate adjustments to the conceptual framework of the collection, in contrast, the widespread adoption of handheld devices proved more difficult to accommodate and had a profoundly disruptive effect.

Today it is commonplace to remark upon and celebrate the disruptive power of new media or technology, but what became apparent at various points in the research were the more perilous aspects of disruption and adaptation. For example, within the discussion of the information infrastructure of the Experience Music Project, it became obvious
that costs associated with the creation and maintenance of information infrastructure could seriously strain the resources of even the most visionary or future-oriented museum. Additionally, changes within the culture at large (specifically the introduction of smart phones) could render entire platforms obsolete. With the British Music Experience, it became apparent that adapting to changes in technology could (and likely would) entail changes in the museum’s mode of address, its workflow, and potentially even its role in relation to content. But the closure of the British Music Experience was not a direct result of a failure to understand or embrace new media technologies. In fact, the museum was on the cutting edge in terms of integrating interactivity within its exhibits and remote access to its resources. The closure does, however, underscore the urgency of developing a strategic relation to the disruptive powers of technology, and of understanding the sustainability of the museum as a content provider within a rapidly changing media landscape. What is simply ‘generational’ in terms of the consumer market can create massive upheaval for the museum—an institution that by its very nature is meant to outlast specific individual or community interests and provide a multi-generational perspective on the world. Thus, the importance of understanding and aligning the timeframes of the museum with those of its surrounding media cultures emerged as another of the frictions visible within the popular music museum. Relatedly, as a living culture, popular music continues to generate new kinds of music, formats for distribution and for listening, social messages, cultural alignments, and interpretations of its own past. As such, it proves at times to be a volatile subject, one that can test the museum’s ability to adapt to its productive restlessness.

This thesis has also illuminated the museum’s ongoing struggle to incorporate popular songs into its exhibitions and collections. While the research material identified some of the reasons for this surprising and widely remarked upon conundrum—including music’s curious immateriality, the influence of copyright (which divides up the musical object into material and immaterial layers), and the primacy of the visual within the museum’s conventional exhibition formats—it remains an unsolved puzzle.
7.3 Limitations and future research

The fieldwork for this thesis was limited to three purpose-built, multi-genre popular music museums: Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland), Experience Music Project (Seattle) and British Music Experience (London). Other investigations might have included additional museums (such as the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles or Rockheim in Trondheim, Norway) in order to expand the sample, or might have shifted focus to museums concerned with specific genres of music (e.g. Hitsville USA, the Motown museum in Detroit, or the Rock 'n' Soul Museum in Memphis). While the criteria for selection established a coherent set that allowed sustained examination of the museum’s core provision, it also limited what could be included and analysed. Thus, what can be inferred from this study is necessarily limited by its parameters. Having selected museums with a high degree of similarity in terms of mission or purpose, the findings of the research might prove to have a more limited application to popular music museums with different structures, shapes, or purposes.

Because the focus of this investigation was the relationship between the subject of popular music and the structure of the museum, discussion of the local contexts of each museum or of its documentation of the experience of the museum’s visitors could not be included. Deeper investigation into the local context of each of the case studies would, no doubt, illuminate other important aspects of their operation, significance, and viability. The institutional biographies contained in this study provide a useful summary of pertinent background information; however, what they reveal about the museum’s local ecosystem, economic impact, value to tourism, and significance for civic pride remains limited.

Similarly, the discussion of how visitors draw connections between things on display and their own lives might have benefited from access to or participation in visitor studies. Additionally, this research might have benefited from a more detailed study of the audience’s online response to the museum: tracking discussions on social media and
bbs, following blogs, or tracing the appropriation of content for personal expression (on Instagram, Tumblr etc.) in order to discern the structures of legitimation in online communities. These represent fertile areas for further research about how visitors ‘use’ and relate to popular music museums.

The broader scope of this research is also limited in its ability to illuminate the way heritage concerns develop within popular music’s communities of interest and affiliation. Again, the contribution to this discussion in Chapter 6 is valuable but not comprehensive. Given that these themes have emerged within popular music studies as topics of central importance, the parameters established for this research may limit its relevance within those discussions. It could be argued that sites of popular music culture heritage other than the purpose-built popular music museum are of equal, and perhaps even greater, importance than institutions in which the experience of popular music is reorganised through the conventions of collection, exhibition, and visitation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of the popular music museum from the point of view of museum studies—a context within which the institutional character of heritage remains central. This is not incidental but represents a commitment to thinking about cultural heritage as a process intrinsically linked to collective and multi-generational public history.

Finally, another productive area for future research might involve examining how the exhibitions of the purpose-built popular music museum compare with exhibitions of popular music created by museums and galleries such as Victoria and Albert Museum (David Bowie Is), Saatchi Gallery (Exhibitionism: The Rolling Stones), Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art (Sympathy for the Devil), and Nasher Gallery at Duke University (The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl).

7.4 Contribution

The most significant contributions of this thesis include the case studies themselves, which are the first to examine the popular music museum as a specific genre of
museum; the interdisciplinary method used to create localised instruments of analysis for each provision; and the proposal of a new vocabulary based on the terminology of computation as a means for describing the unique character of collection, exhibition, and visitation within the mediated museum.

Undertaken, in part, in response to a gap in the research and scholarly literature concerning popular music and the museum, this thesis is the first to focus exclusively on the popular music museum and offer a detailed analysis of how it fulfills the familiar functions of a museum. While popular music studies offer a growing body of work on popular music cultural heritage in which the museums discussed here are often mentioned in passing, only the work of Marion Leonard (and Robert Knifton) has addressed the popular music museum in any significant detail. With more than a dozen popular music museums opening or planning to open since the research began (See Appendix 2), it is hoped that one of its fundamental contributions will be to begin to redress this omission.

None of the three institutions forming the central case studies has previously been analysed in detail by museum or popular music scholars. Nor has any multi-institution research focusing on the purpose-built popular music museum paved the way for this study. Thus, each chapter provides an original institutional biography of the museum it uses as its case study and the thesis as a whole represents the first to address this relatively new genre of museum. These institutional histories are assembled from the findings of the fieldwork—which included the five site visits and interviews with thirteen museum professionals—as well as a wide variety of popular and social media sources and a small number of academic publications. They extend the research of Kevin Moore by bringing key ideas found in *Musuem and Popular Culture* (1997) to bear on more recent case studies. And, they supplement the work of Marion Leonard by providing additional examples of museums that collect and exhibit popular music heritage and providing detailed information about organizational structure and programme history. Presenting them in a uniform fashion provides them with a modular structure that
allows comparison between each of the three case studies and between these museums and other institutions. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the developing discourse on popular music heritage within popular music studies (led in the UK by Sarah Baker, Andy Bennett, Amanda Brandellero, Sara Cohen, Jez Collins, Marc Duffett, Susanne Janssen, Robert Knifton, Marion Leonard, Paul Long, and Les Roberts) both through the institutional histories and by offering a perspective on the popular music heritage directly informed by museum studies.

Conversely, it is hoped that future research within museum and cultural studies will draw on these case studies in order to provide a more comprehensive survey of this growing sector of the museum world. Particularly, in research centres such as the Popular Music Project at the Norman Lear Centre at the University of Southern California, the Museum Studies program of New York University and the Cultural Studies Interdisciplinary Graduate Program at Queen’s University where popular culture heritage research is being undertaken.

The interdisciplinary approach used in this thesis has combined concepts from museum, media, and popular music studies in new and productive ways and represents a second area of contribution. Each chapter has drawn together ideas and methodologies from different disciplines in its discussion of the popular music museum’s core provision. It used artefact analysis and psychoanalytically grounded social theory to explain the value of the collection; social semiotics and theories of collective memory to explain how the exhibition serves as a site of cultural heritage; and network theory and online observation analysis to develop the concept of distributive visitation.

The outcomes of this interdisciplinary approach included the creation of three localised instruments of analysis. In Chapter 4 a model of museum value that integrates material and intangible aspects of culture and offers recognition of the relational character of the objects of the popular music museum’s collection was provided. It is a model that could be applied to other popular culture collections and to other museum subjects.
where binary expressions of value are inappropriate to the entanglements and experiential dimensions of its cultural objects. It is a model which contributes to an ongoing dialogue about the centrality of material culture in the museum (Dudley 2010, 2012; Conn 2010, Hetherington 2014) and the negotiations of social values in relation to those objects (Janes 2009, Jones 2010, Glass 2014, Phillips 2011, Sandell 2006). The model of popular music material culture’s field of value benefits from its simplicity and clarity as well as its compatibility with artefact analysis and museum information systems. It offers popular music studies a framework for examining music heritage from a perspective more attuned to actual museum practice. And, contributes to museum studies a point of reference for developing more detailed thinking about how to evaluate the materials of living cultures. While it certainly proves adequate to the task of explaining how value emerges within the collection of the purpose-built, multi-genre popular music museum, further research would be required to confirm its wider applicability.

The exhibition analysis of Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses in Chapter 5 drew upon social semiotics and spatial analysis to create a framework for understanding the exhibition as a dynamic form of communication in which the experiential appropriation of meaning rather than the exhibition narrative serve as the meta-level of analysis. This approach builds on research focusing on exhibition design practices (Basu 2007; Skolnick 2012; Hillier and Tzortzi 2011) and advances that work’s interrogation of the primacy of narrative as the point of reference for exhibition experience by integrating it within the broader set of considerations relating to audience experience. In the context of this chapter, the analysis grounds the discussion of how Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses functions as a site of cultural heritage. It is possible to imagine developing the framework further by using it to ground visitor studies research involving motion and data tracking, which would allow a better understanding of the relation between design and use.

The interdisciplinary achievement in Chapter 6 pertains to the examination of a particular dimension of digital culture (popular music cultural heritage) as a field of practice.
involving both agency and structure. With a dual emphasis on local use and platform protocol, the analysis of the distributive visit provides a model of an approach which is able to move from particular to general without losing sight of what Jose van Dijck (2013) has characterised as the ‘co-evolution of platform and sociality’. It is hoped that both the framework and the case study will prove to be of value to current research within the area of popular music cultural heritage—such as that undertaken within the context of the Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) sponsored 'Popular music heritage, cultural memory and cultural identity' (POPID) project—particularly for its detailed examination of the potential for collaboration between institutions and what we have called ‘heritage at large’. Additionally, it contributes some empirical research to the developing discussion of the distributed or networked museum (Semper and Spasojevic 2002; Russo 2012; Parry 2007; Proctor 2010; Kidd 2014; Pettersson et al 2010; Harris 2013).

Throughout this thesis, the impact and importance of the popular music museum’s relation to media was highlighted. For instance, the challenges to the museum represented by the song and the role played by recording technologies were noted in the chapter on the collection. In the discussion of the exhibition as a space where the audience participates in the co-creation of the cultural narrative, one could observe several ways that media (interactive media in particular) is critical to this process. And, in discourse regarding the extended and distributive visit, media appeared as defining. While it may not be surprising that the popular music museum’s media-born subject matter has influenced the ways in which the museum has declined certain conventions of materiality, space, and audience, it nevertheless remains significant. Not only is it of central importance to the popular music museum, but it also provides a glimpse of relations to media that might shape the future of other museums as well. In order to draw out some of the broader implications of this relationship and highlight the effect of this reconfiguration, this thesis will conclude by proposing a new vocabulary to describe the provision that the popular music museum has first declined and then refashioned.
7.5 New vocabulary of assets, platform and dynamic array

The popular music museum represents a site of media convergence. It provides an example, strikingly, of a museum born of and shaped by media. Media constitutes its subject, informs its methods, delineates its surroundings, and shapes its identity. Within the popular music museum mass media, multimodal, and network media co-exist, often operating at several scales simultaneously. Certain aspects of the popular music museum’s relation to media echo discussions that are already familiar in the field of museum studies. For instance, the discussions of how the museum itself is a medium (Hooper-Greenhill 1995; Parry 2007), those that examine the museum’s longstanding identification with the use of media (Witcomb 2003; Henning 2006; Russo 2012), and those exploring the adaptation of the museum to the broader context of ubiquitous network media (Kidd 2014; Parry 2015). However, as a media-saturated museum, the popular music museum provides an amplified example of some of the dilemmas of agility and adaptation. While the circumstances faced by other museums adapting to the challenges of media might not be as dramatic as those faced by the popular music museum, there is an advantage to having the popular music museum’s more graphic illustration of the challenges and opportunities for comparison. For instance, the challenge of establishing a framework for museum value for a ‘born popular’ culture that has its origins in recording technology may uniquely belong to the popular music museum, but the question of how to establish the value of popular, mass-produced, commercial culture does not belong to this type of museum alone. Similarly, the impact of networked media on the visit has a specific significance for popular music culture—particularly in terms of how it relocates the museum to the vernacular realm where it encounters the amateur expertise that exists within independent popular music heritage initiatives—but it also has general relevance for other museums using social media or offering its audience museum experiences online. Thus, by drawing analogies between the popular music museum where media has a heavy imprint and other museums where the core provision reflect the influence of media in different degrees and at different scales, it is possible to
see where a more intense embrace of media might lead, to catch a glimpse of what might be lost and what might be gained within the ‘mediated museum’ (Parry 2014).

What the popular music museum offers is the possibility of thinking about media as constitutive rather than something added to the museum. This is useful for anticipating the emergence of the post-digital museum (Parry 2013) in which the digital is fully integrated with pre-existing structures. And it is also useful for reimagining the museum from the perspective of the ‘born digital’ audience who live in a cultural context defined by digital, computational, and network media. The difference between the additive and the constitutive role of media roughly corresponds to the difference between twentieth and twenty-first century concepts of museum culture; however, this difference should not be mistakenly associated with linear notions of time or technological ‘evolution’. The difference is, more essentially, one of intersecting and overlapping structural complexes that frame a given field of practice and inform the social actions that animate it. One way of dramatising the difference between the additive and constitutive roles of media is by establishing a conceptual framework that employs terminology drawn from the language of computation. For instance, we can think about how the collection comprises ‘assets’, exhibitions are ‘platforms’ and visitation involves a ‘dynamic array’. Because such terminology both presupposes the digital dimension of contemporary reality and also highlights the mutability of the museum’s format, it offers a fresh perspective from which to view the patterns and arrangements that organise our social experience of heritage. Thus, the choice of the language of computation is not simply a matter of metaphor.

**Collections as ‘assets’**

An ‘asset’ is a non-hierarchical description that allows for the co-existence of varied entities. Using the term ‘asset’ to describe the contents of the museum’s collection suggests a way to think about how material and immaterial culture co-exist within it and to acknowledge how they operate in tandem in reference to value. Its use in business

54 Here Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ and Sewell’s ‘transposable schemas’ help us qualify this broad generalization.
reinforces the association of the collection with value, but more important in this circumstance is the flexibility associated with the use of the term within the digital realm. Here, the term ‘asset’ can apply to any of the elements involved in information creation, storage, or exchange and may include hardware, software, and data. Thus, applying the term ‘asset’ to the content of the collection reconceives of it as an adaptable structure with a more limited prescriptive function than tradition might dictate.

A more specific use of the term within a digital enterprise associates it with metadata; that is data about data that locates an item within a broader schema and makes it discoverable. Such an approach was evident in the collection of the Experience Music Project where the oral history archive (a documentary media project) co-exists alongside Jimi Hendrix’s Resistol Westerner hat (a physical artefact) and the Seattle Band Map (a diagrammatic participatory interface). To speak of the collection’s content as ‘assets’ not only begins with the notion that use is variable but also that it issues from human purpose rather than the identity of the thing. Assets are called for according to programme needs and are understood as having the potential to serve different purposes. Thus, the use of ‘assets’ also implicitly recognises the transmedia context in which the museum operates as a producer of a variety of content including, but not limited to, gallery exhibitions.

**Exhibition as ‘platform’**

Another term in the media-based vocabulary for describing the museum is ‘platform’. *Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses* (Chapter 5) demonstrated how onsite exhibition was just one of several possible channels of communication available for conveying the curatorial concept. In such a context, the exhibition is one ‘platform’ amongst a number of others, each with its own specific parameters and operating logic, more or less suitable to one or another undertaking. The use of this term highlights the institution’s need to deliberate about which platform matches the strategic objective of the communication; it encourages awareness of rhetorical approach, and suggests the interconnection of the various public presentations organised by the museum. The term places emphasis on the
staging of display, hence its performative and theatrical aspects, while simultaneously emphasising the influence of digital cultures (Proctor 2010). In the world of contemporary art the term is employed to emphasise the constructed nature of the public situation as well as a tool for rethinking the terms of engagement with art, emphasising its discursive value over its object status (Delanty and Turner 2011, 58). Consequently, ‘platform’ has the effect of shifting emphasis from the exhibition’s spatial dimension to awareness that it is an event that is appropriated through embodied social experience. Each platform acts as a framing device and has its own form but its users always play a prominent role in defining its cultural character.

As something that undergoes periodic ‘upgrades,’ a platform is revisable and capable of integrating new functionality and, although its temporality could raise questions of obsolescence (planned or otherwise), it is not simply driven by the abstract forward propulsion of ‘the new’. Its mutability over time finds complement in its adaptability when introduced into new contexts or faced with emerging practices, in much the same way that an exhibition is best initiated by defining the ‘problem’ of the subject before determining the exhibition rhetoric. Consequently, using the term ‘platform’ to describe the public presentation functions of the museum also reinforces the provisional quality of the support offered as well as the possibility of debris resulting from a process of making or building.

Visitation as ‘dynamic array’

A ‘dynamic array’ is a variable-sized, random access data structure in which information is held apart from the primary operation, ready to be called for as occasion warrants. It is a term that places emphasis on the museum’s temporalities and, as a kind of storehouse, also highlights the museum’s location within a vast quantity of cultural information. Using this term to characterise the visit underscores the plurality of possible temporal and spatial contexts where users might engage the museum. To think of the visit as a dynamic array means placing emphasis on the improvisational and as-needed character of the audience’s engagement with content.
As we saw in Chapter 6, the British Music Experience provided the context for thinking about how the popular music museum could refashion the visit in distributive terms. What became apparent in that discussion was that the onsite, special-occasion visit was just one of the possible forms of engagement the audience might have with the museum. The case study highlighted the distributive visit was not only plural but also relational, involving one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communicative exchanges that facilitate encounters with heritage from within the everyday. It allowed us to imagine the museum contributing to, and perhaps even initiating, conversations that occur outside its domain. It suggested an image of the museum as a kind of digital flaneur—sauntering from one conversation to another, as part of the crowd.

While the choice of the language of computation is not mere metaphor, it is nevertheless figurative. It has been selected to aid in the creation of a model of the twenty-first-century museum that connects it directly and deeply with the change in the ‘mode of communication’ that has come to characterise the current era. Thus, while the museum has at various times been associated with the mausoleum, the prison, main street, the temple, or the shopping mall, the language of computation has been introduced to encourage thinking about the museum as an interface. As the device for mediating between human and machine, inside and outside, and different social elements or levels of organisation, the museum positions, connects, and translates different realms. The interface exists at the threshold of difference; and in fact is the threshold. That the museum is the interface between the past and the present is easy to see. But it is equally important to recognize its role as a social interface. It is hoped that translating the core provision of the museum into the language of computation and thinking about the museum as interface can help open up a productive space for thinking about the museum’s relation to media. Ultimately, the thesis concludes that because the popular music museum and media are deeply allied—with media playing a defining role in forming its subject, embedded in its display practices, and a crucial resource of the
broader context within which the museum’s social purpose is established—understanding the experiment of the popular music museum may help other museums better accommodate themselves to the demands of a media world.
Appendix 1 Outline of thesis structure

When Media Becomes Form

Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 How does popular music refashion museum provision? What does the popular music museum demonstrate about the shape of the museum in the 21st century?

Chapter 2 Popular culture challenges the museum with:
- mass production
- multimodal communication
- vernacular culture

Chapter 3 Popular music challenges the museum with:
- personal memory and meaning
- non-monumentality
- contested ownership

Chapter 4 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's
Collection
values the
mass-produced + personal
in order to engage the
social imaginary
in a hall of fame
defined by
mass media

Chapter 5 Experience Music Projects's
Exhibition
employ the
multimodal + non-monumental
in order to occasion
heritage
in a project space
that uses
interactive media

Chapter 5 British Music Experience's
Visit
embraces the
vernacular + contested
in order to recognize
distributed expertise
within the mediascape
that surrounds the
museum

Chapter 7 Popular music museum suggests a new vocabulary for the mediated museum. This new vocabulary reflects both the influence of media-born culture on the museum and the expectation that the influence of media on the museum will continue to grow.

Collection of assets allows co-existence of high and low material and intangible

Exhibition as platform allows changeability of display rhetoric centrality of user

Visitation as dynamic array allows strategic use of plural, multi-faceted media operationalize ‘as needed’
## Popular music museums

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<tr>
<td>Country Music Hall of Fame</td>
<td>Nashville</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td><a href="http://countrymusichalloffame.org/">http://countrymusichalloffame.org/</a></td>
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<td>Hitsville USA, Motown Museum</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.motownmuseum.org/">http://www.motownmuseum.org/</a></td>
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<td>Memphis Rock and Soul</td>
<td>Memphis</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.memphisrocknsoul.org/">http://www.memphisrocknsoul.org/</a></td>
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### National

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<th>Popular music museums</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Opened</th>
<th>Closed</th>
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<td>Danish Rock Museum</td>
<td>Roskilde</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2016</td>
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### Artist

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<th>Popular music museums</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Opened</th>
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<th>URL</th>
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</table>
Appendix 3  Interview Subjects

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland OH
James Henke, Vice President of Exhibitions and Curatorial Affairs (May 16, 2011)
Lauren Onkey, Vice President of Education and Public Programs (May 16, 2011)
Andy Leach, Director of Library and Archives (May 18, 2011)

Experience Music Project, Seattle WA
Jasen Emmons, Director of Curatorial Affairs (July 10, 2011)
Forrest Gibson, Chief Technology Officer (July 11, 2011)
Patricia Costa Kim, Education Director (July 12, 2011)
Dave Rosencrans, former Curator (July 12, 2011)
Jeff Heiman, President, Pacific Northwest Chapter National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) (July 11, 2011)

British Music Experience, London UK
Paul Lilley, Curator (September 6, 2011)

Popular Music Heritage Collections Online
Richard Green, Director of the Music Division, Library and Archives Canada (June 13, 2011)
Andy Linehan, Curator, Popular Music Collections, The British Library (October 23, 2011)
Denise Benson, Curator ‘Then and Now: Toronto Nightlife History’ (August 20, 2015)
Jim Shedden, Curator ‘1000 Songs’ (October 1, 2015)
Appendix 4 Exhibitions

Primary (repeat site visits)

*From Asbury Park to the Promised Land: The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen*
April 10, 2009–February 27, 2011
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland
June 20–23, 2010

*Women Who Rock: Vision, Passion, Power*
May 13, 2011–February 26, 2012
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland
May 13–15, 2011

*Nirvana: Taking Punk to the Masses*
April 16, 2011–April 22, 2013
Experience Music Project, Seattle
July 10–12, 2011

*Messenger: Bob Marley Exhibition*
14 July–22 October 2012
British Music Experience, London
October 21–22, 2012

*David Bowie Is...*
September 25–November 27, 2013
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
September 29, October 3 and November 7, 2013

Secondary (single site visit)

*John Lennon: The New York City Years*
May 12, 2009–January 3, 2010
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Annex, New York
November 15, 2009

*Warhol Live: Music & Dance in Andy Warhol’s Work*
September 25, 2008–January 18, 2009
Musée des beaux-Arts, Montréal
December 28, 2008
Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967
October 10, 2008–January 11, 2009
Musée d’art contemporain, Montréal
December 29, 2008

We Want Miles
April 30–August 29, 2010
Musée des beaux-Arts, Montréal
August 2, 2010

The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl
April 15–September 5, 2011
Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston
May 7, 2011

Home of Metal
June 18–September 25, 2011
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham
September 20, 2011

Björk
March 8–June 7, 2015
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
June 5, 2015
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doi:10.1080/13691180802660644.


Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

doi:10.1080/10417940600846029.


New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rowman and Littlefield.


Lindstrand, Fredrik, and Eva Insulander. 2012. “Setting the Ground for Engagement.”


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