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Public and media reaction to the both the exhibition and the restoration of the room have been very positive thus far, indeed, beyond what might have been expected: Simon Jenkins in the *Times* described the room as ‘a sensation’ and Jonathan Jones in *The Guardian* called it ‘unprecedented’. But the project does not end here. The room is very much a working space requiring day-to-day maintenance, educational activities and evening events need to be managed, study days and conferences organised. A handling-object collection has been formed and daily sessions, run by the volunteers of the Museum’s Friends organisation, allow visitors to handle many of the types of objects on display, and daily tours and talks by both curators and trained volunteers also take place as well as regular special educational events. But there are improvements that we would like to make, especially concerning the provision of more detailed information about the objects on display, and a full evaluation of the gallery will be undertaken over the summer that will include a survey of the reactions of both visitors and peers, and changes made where necessary. But in refurbishing the King’s Library and installing the new exhibition one key objective has been achieved, as was noted by Giles Worsley in *The Telegraph*: ‘One of London’s great rooms has been restored and given life back at the heart of British Museum’.

### **Design aspects of Enlightenment exhibition in the restored King’s Library** **- Hanna Payne: Assistant Designer of The Enlightenment Gallery**

This was a very different project to the ones we normally work on for the Museum as the main exhibit is the room itself. The showcases which line the walls were originally glazed bookshelves made to house George III’s Library and to suit their new use for displaying objects as well as books they have had to be completely restored. A fibre-optic lighting system has also been fitted. The floorcases are all original to the room and have also been restored. Additionally a number of new facsimile cases, built to the same specification as the originals, have also been especially built.

It was a great pleasure to work with beautiful materials such as oak and walnut for the cases and marble for the plinths. All the materials used in the design of the exhibition had to be thoroughly researched to make sure they were appropriate to the early nineteenth century. We called in experts in historical interiors to advise us on details such as the type of paint we should use and the appropriate fabrics. Everything had to be authentic, even down to the way objects were displayed and mounted. The standard material used in the Museum for the construction of object mounts has traditionally been inert Perspex but in this instance only powder coated brass mounts have been used, again to maintain the early nineteenth century feel of the display.

Sourcing these materials was challenging as all the fabrics and paints had to be tested to conform with the standards set by our conservation department. Normally we would avoid using materials like silk in a showcase as it often fails Oddy testing, the standard requirement for all in-case materials, but after much searching we found some silk that would be suitable with the objects and work with the overall design.

The majority of the objects on display have come from the reserve collections. They were often very dusty from being held in storage for so long, especially the large stone sculptures. A team of conservators worked over a two year period on the task of cleaning them up - it was amazing to see the details that had been hidden.



View of gallery looking south, bust of Sir Joseph Banks to right.