

## London Museum Collections Development Policy

**Name of museum:** *London Museum and London Museum Docklands*

**Name of governing body:** *Board of Governors of London Museum*

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** *2024*

**Policy review procedure:** *The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.*

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** *2028 (following opening of West Smithfield site)*

*Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.*

### Policy

#### 1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

We are here to enrich the understanding and appreciation of London and all its people – past, present, future. A home for learning, exploration and adventure, we aspire to be a force for good in London, as London must be for the world. The museum is London's shared place in the middle of it all. Slap bang in the middle of rush hour, of 10,000 years of history, of London's biggest arguments, trade routes and memories. No matter where you've come from, how long you're staying for, or what side of the river you live on, we offer a home where all of London's stories cross and collide. Our strategic plan provides the roadmap for all that we do for the next five years as we establish ourselves in our new home at West Smithfield, and develop and deliver a new strategy for the London Museum Docklands.

Our strategic objectives for the period – 2023 - 2028 are to:

1. Build Our New Future
2. Reach More People Than Ever Before
3. Stretch Thinking
4. Engage All Young Londoners
5. Transform Ourselves, For A Better World

Our collections underpin all that we do and embody, represent and evidence the energy, history and passion of London itself. They are the 'DNA' of London. They are our core content and their development affects every aspect of our programming. Our Content Framework shapes how we organise and deliver our content. How we present the collection, what is in it, the research that supports it, all should engage with the big questions about London and its place in the world.

To deliver our strategic objectives we are working to increase access (intellectually, physically and digitally), improve the care and storage of the collections, review significance and rationalising, enhance the information we hold and intellectually developing the collections. Additionally, we want to grow the use of our collections for research, increase their availability online and make strategic acquisitions to ensure we are collecting for tomorrow.

Our current ambitions are derived from our long-term purpose as set out in the two Acts of Parliament that established the museum. These state that we will: care for, preserve and add objects to our collections; make them accessible via display and for research; promote understanding and appreciation of historic and contemporary London and of its society and culture using this collection and other means.

- 1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3. By definition, London Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

## **2. History of the collections**

London Museum's collection, called **The London Collection**, has a history going back nearly 200 years. It is the world's largest collection relating to a single urban centre. It covers over 450,000 years of the history of this place, and it is the most important source for the material evidence of London's past. It was originally formed of collections from two earlier museums: the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum (1911-1965).

The Corporation of London established the Guildhall Museum in 1826. Its collection of antiquities was built up during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with items coming from construction sites in the City of London. The museum confined its collecting to items found largely within 'the Square Mile', an area delineated by the medieval walled city, and from the Thames. It acquired other material relating to the civic and ceremonial history of the City of London as well as architectural fixtures and fittings, and a number of important private collections, such as those of John Walker Baily and R. E. Way.

The London Museum, founded in 1911, had a much broader and more ambitious collecting brief. With a specific populist agenda to tell the story of the history of London from earliest times through to the present, it collected from across London, not just from the City. The museum was the brainchild of two politicians: Lewis, first Viscount Harcourt and Reginald Brett, second Viscount Esher. For much of its existence, the museum was funded by central government. Guy Laking, the museum's first Keeper and Secretary to the Trustees, played an important role in building the collections. Under his, and then Mortimer Wheeler's keeperships, a collection of national and international standing was created covering antiquities, fine and decorative arts, dress and textiles, vehicles, rare books, maps, manuscripts and printed ephemera. J.G. Joicey was perhaps the museum's most generous benefactor. He loaned, and later gifted, his large collection of porcelain, clocks and watches, jewellery, embroidery and costume, as well as on his death in 1919 leaving the museum the residue of his considerable estate to support acquisitions.

After the Second World War, both the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum found themselves in temporary homes. During the 1950s, discussions took place positing the amalgamation of the two museums to form a single entity. In 1965, the Museum of London was established by an Act of Parliament and in 1976 the new museum opened to the public at London Wall. The suite of galleries presented a three dimensional biography of the capital, drawing on many items from the newly combined collections as well as more recent acquisitions. In 2024, the museum rebranded as London Museum, in anticipation of the opening of its new main home at West Smithfield in 2026.

The greatest areas of growth in The London Collection over the last forty years have been in archaeology and material relating to London's modern history. The destruction of large parts of the City in the Blitz provided an opportunity for large scale archaeological excavations, with the London Museum's Director, W. F. Grimes, playing a leading role. In 1976, the museum had two field units, one for the City of London and one for Greater London, with complete archives of archaeological records and finds being acquired on a site-by-site basis. In 1991, the two units were restructured into one service and in 2002 an Archaeological Archive and Research Centre opened in Hackney where the finds and records from individual excavations are deposited and stored. In 2003, the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology was created with the support of the Wellcome Trust, to care for and research the human skeletal remains. In 2011, Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) was split from the museum to form an independent limited charitable

company, although finds continue to be deposited at London Museum's Archaeological Archive. Other finds made by 'mudlarks' on the Thames foreshore are regularly added to the collection, and the museum hosts the London Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The museum was a pioneer in collecting contemporary material from all walks of London life. Items were acquired from domestic environments as well as the work and leisure spaces of the capital. The museum was sector leading in the 1970s and 80s in its approach towards collecting and representing London's diverse population and the history of immigration to the capital through projects such as *The Peopling of London* (1993-94). Collecting has often focused on objects that tell a powerful personal story. The closure of London's upriver docks and wharves in the 1970s and 1980s spurred a new collecting initiative, particularly tools and equipment used in the port, in order to preserve a vanishing part of London's heritage. In 2003, a museum to display this material, the Museum of London Docklands, opened in a converted Georgian dock warehouse opposite Canary Wharf. The museum was one of the first social history museums to recognise the significance of collaborative, contemporary collecting to document the life experiences of under-represented communities. The Curating London initiative (2018-2023), funded by Arts Council England, was inspired by the lived experience of contemporary Londoners. As part of the programme, curators worked in partnership with Londoners to capture the breadth and depth of 21<sup>st</sup> century life in the city across our two sites. Curating London emerged from the acknowledgement that the museum needed insight into the popular culture and everyday experience of local communities, especially those whose voices have often been marginalised in the past.

Oral history was a new area of collecting for the museum in the late 1980s. Many interviews were made over the next two decades, creating a wide ranging and important collection, which is especially strong in material relating to immigration into the city in the post-war period, and in material relating to the lives of those associated with the river and the working history of the docks. It includes interviews by famous History Workshop historians such as Raphael Samuel and Jerry White, as well as the audio interviews recorded by London Weekend Television for the series *The Making of Modern London*. In 2014, the museum completed the digitisation of its oral history collection which, to date, amounts to over 5000 hours of recording. The museum continues to add to its oral history recordings through projects such as Curating London and Listening to London (2020).

The photographic collection expanded rapidly after the opening of the Museum of London. A small collection had been built up by the London Museum, but it was only with the appointment of a dedicated curator of historic photographs that the collection began to develop in a more focused way. More recently, the HLF-funded acquisition project 'Beyond Documentary' (2015-2018) explored the ways in which contemporary photographic practitioners, many of them women, have exploited the apparently neutral medium of photography to explore social issues and the urban environment. Paintings, prints and drawings acquisitions also increased after 1976 with help from funding agencies and charities. Major acquisitions included George Elgar Hicks' 'The General Post Office, One Minute to Six' of 1860 (1990), the 'Rhinebeck Panorama' of London, 1806 (1998) and two works by Henry Nelson O'Neil, 'Eastward Ho! August 1857' and 'Home Again, 1858' (2004). The 1815 panorama of London taken from the tower of St Margaret's Church next to Westminster Abbey was acquired by the museum in 2019, with assistance from the Art Fund and other donors.

The dress and textile collection has grown in a similar way to other modern collections with many items added made by London ready-to-wear manufacturers and couture houses and designers. Contemporary collecting is actively pursued with projects undertaken including Muslim fashion (2014), Punks (2016) and Jewish Fashion Makers, which resulted in the 2023 exhibition Fashion City. An active collecting project was successfully completed around the London Olympics in 2012 which included costumes from the opening ceremony as well as the Olympic Cauldron designed by Thomas Heatherwick for which a special permanent gallery was created within the museum.

The museum began to acquire born-digital material in 2012 when it collected c.6000 unique Tweets using the hashtag #citizencurators during the two weeks of the Olympic Games. This was an experimental collecting project that investigated the issues surrounding the collecting of social media. In 2015-16, a collecting project focused on video gaming and the video game industry in London. The collecting of born-digital material has subsequently been normalised across a range of the museum's collections, and has enabled us to capture social experiences that only exist online, such as WhatsApp threads during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

London as a centre of making and manufacture has long been a strength of the museum's collections, and this has recently led to a new focus on 'maker culture' in the city. The contemporary making collection has been developed to reflect the relationships between craft and design practice, and the cultural and economic life of modern London.

Access to the London Collection has increased through the creation of the collections online resource on the museum's web site. Currently, over 120,000 objects can be accessed online.

### **3. An overview of current collections**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The term used to describe the collections of London Museum in their widest sense is '**The London Collection**'. This incorporates the **Core Collections**, supporting collections (archival objects, auxiliary objects, display assets, and handling assets) and the **Museum Business Archive**. It is a collection of unrivalled breadth, covering the entire history of the nation's capital, and around half a million years of human activity on the site. Its significance is recognised by its designated status as being of national and international importance. The London Collection reflects our standing as the world's largest collection relating to a single urban centre and we currently hold almost 7 million items. Viewed as a whole, the London Collection provides a multi-faceted, three-dimensional, multi-media biography of the metropolis and the people who lived in this place for over 450,000 years. The Core Collection is described below.

#### **3.2 Core Collections**

##### **Archaeological Archive: c. 6 million items**

The Museum's archaeological collections, mostly held within the Archaeological Archive in Hackney, are not only by far the largest and most comprehensive body of urban archaeology in

Britain, but also one of the most important repositories for urban studies in the world. The Archive holds contextually excavated archaeological material from sites across Greater London. It covers all periods of London's urban history, as well as the prehistory of the region from the earliest evidence of human occupation half a million years ago. Among these extensive holdings are: the sole source of information on all aspects of the Roman built environment and context for non-excavated Roman collections in London and elsewhere; material excavated in and around Covent Garden and Aldwych, which constitutes the evidence for the existence of the Middle Saxon settlement of *Lundenwic*; unparalleled evidence of medieval domestic life and the structure of the medieval city; post-medieval material reflecting London's role as the nation's pre-eminent market, complemented by artefactual evidence reflecting London's global trading networks.

### **Human remains: over 30,000 individuals**

The human skeletal remains curated by the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology are a unique and internationally significant collection. London is one of the few capitals in the world to be able to tell its history through the physical evidence of the people who inhabited it. The skeletons held in the collection are all archaeologically derived, and this means that each one also has associated contextual information. Every skeleton has a unique 'bone biography' capturing different sets of life data as a person grows, lives and dies. This information is often the sole means of determining a person's social and living conditions, their diet and nutrition, heritage, disease patterns and health, and their relative status. The skeletal remains provide extraordinary data about individuals and population groups; and tangible evidence for the demographic structure of the capital and its region over half a million years.

### **Historic Collections: over 124,000 items**

The collections of items covering the Lower Paleolithic period to the seventeenth century provide a complement to the archaeological collections. Flint and stone implements constitute the largest part of the prehistoric materials. The Museum holds material of international importance from sites such as Swanscombe, Yiewsley and Stoke Newington. The most important holdings within the prehistoric collection are the 900 pieces of Bronze Age and Iron Age metalwork, mostly recovered from the Thames. The Thomas Layton collection (on long-term loan since the 1960s) includes a fine series of late Hallstatt/early La Tène daggers and two famous items of later Iron Age metalwork: a chariot fitting or 'horn cap' decorated in the Celtic art style, and a bronze-bound oak tankard. Recently, the Havering Hoard, an important group of bronze objects, mostly axe heads, was added to the collection.

The museum has by far the largest collection of Romano-British marble statuary in Britain. Of this, the London Mithraeum group, including representations of Mithras, Minerva, Serapis, and Mercury, is the finest example of Roman sculpture in the country. The samian ware holdings comprise the preeminent collection in Britain, while the leather holdings form an important resource for the study of Roman techniques, particularly shoe manufacture. The most famous leather items are the 'bikini' briefs which are the most complete examples known. Further holdings of glass, metal and the wide-ranging selection of domestic, industrial and religious artefacts combine to make this perhaps the best collection of Roman materials in Britain.

The Saxon period is represented by important groups of items from the pagan Saxon cemeteries at Mitcham, Croydon, Hanwell and Ewell, along with Late Saxon and early Norman material from the City, including pottery, domestic items and jewellery. The single most important object of Late

Saxon date in the collections, generally acknowledged as the finest Viking antiquity in the country, is the carved tomb-slab with runic inscription found near St Paul's in 1852.

The medieval period is one of the most celebrated elements of our overall holdings because of its breadth, depth and quality. It is strongest in ordinary domestic objects, particularly dress accessories, knives, tools and arms and armour. Pilgrim and secular badges and souvenirs constitute the most important group of their kind in Britain and one of the finest in Europe. The ceramics holdings are generally recognized as the best collection of medieval pottery in England, if not Europe.

The early modern collections reflect the huge changes in London life and society during this time. Amongst the preeminent holdings are edged weapons, scientific and mathematical instruments, London-made musical instruments, metalwork, cloth and dyers' seals, trade tokens, and glass and ceramics (including Rhenish stoneware and Delftware). The world-famous Cheapside Hoard is an internationally celebrated group (almost 500 pieces). It is a key source for our knowledge of Elizabethan and early Stuart jewellery and the largest hoard of its kind anywhere in the world.

### **Modern collections: over c.100,000 items**

The period after the Great Fire is reflected in collections that document the experience of living in the metropolis for Londoners of all sections of society and cover an overwhelming range of themes: toys and games; life events; domestic material; furniture, fixtures and fittings; items relating to metropolitan infrastructure such as government, public utilities, welfare, housing, and education; material derived from service industries including retail, leisure, finance, and telecommunications. Significant events in the capital are represented, such as the Great Exhibition, the Blitz, the Festival of Britain, and the three London Olympic games. Of particular significance is the collection of material relating to the campaign for women's suffrage, including minute books, photographs and postcards, badges and scarves, and relics from hunger strikes. More recent political protest material includes items from Brian Haw's peace camp set up in Parliament Square in 2001, the Occupy protests of 2012, and the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020.

The museum holds workshop tools and machinery for seventy-five different crafts, manufacturing and processing trades; extensive groups of objects relating to London's principal markets, notably Billingsgate, Spitalfields and Covent Garden; and unrivalled collections of material relating to London's docks including river craft and cargo handling equipment ranging from dockers' hooks to hydraulic jiggers. The ceramic collections of the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century are outstanding, with nationally important material from London porcelain factories and art pottery made by Doulton, William de Morgan and the Martin brothers. The contemporary making collection builds on these foundations, particularly in the areas of ceramics, furniture, metalwork and jewellery.

### **Dress and Textiles: c. 23,000 items**

The museum holds over 23,000 dress and textile items from the medieval period to the present day, which together with the earlier archaeological holdings of dress allow the fashions and tastes of the capital to be reconstructed throughout its history. The focus is on clothes and textiles made, promoted, bought and worn in London to represent the capital's role in the design, production and consumption of garments and reflect the life of all of London's communities. The collection ranges from garments sewn at home, made by dressmakers and tailors to those created by London-based

couture houses and designers such as Lucile, Hardy Amies, Norman Hartnell, Victor Stiebel, Mary Quant, Katharine Hamnett, Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen. Clothing purchased in department stores, high street chains, boutiques, suburban outfitters and markets represent London's varied retail outlets. As often as possible, clothing is acquired along with the oral testimony and evidence of those who owned and wore it. For example, in 2016, the museum acquired a collection of clothing and accessories formerly owned by the architectural and planning consultant Francis Golding, in effect a 'sartorial biography', which was complemented by the acquisition of copies of some of his papers, letters and photographs. The collection also contains important examples of theatrical costumes.

### **Art Collections: c. 170,000 items**

The art collections comprise a visual encyclopaedia and record of London from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. They include major works of art by leading artists alongside items of historic rather than artistic significance. They reflect the importance of London both as a centre for art and a subject for artists, providing a reflection of London's diverse physical and social fabric. The paintings, prints and drawings collection (c 25,000 items) is one of the largest in the United Kingdom and includes works by artists such as Canaletto, Paul Sandby, Henry Nelson O'Neil, Walter Sickert, David Bomberg and Henry Moore. The emphasis of the photographic collection (over 150,000 items) is primarily on topography and social documentary, and includes photographers such as Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton, Christina Broom, Bill Brandt, Henry Grant, and Rut Blees Luxemburg. The collection now includes works in a variety of media, including sculpture, installations, film, performance, sound and born-digital art.

### **Ephemera, rare books, maps and manuscripts: over 100,000 items**

The museum's collection of printed and manuscript ephemera comprises around 100,000 items. It is arranged thematically, covering all aspects of London's cultural, social and working history ranging from entertainment and shopping through to health care, political campaigning and crime. In effect, it is emblematic of the city's history as reflected in its ephemeral documents, flyers, posters, tickets and pamphlets. The collection includes both historic and contemporary material, ranging from miscellaneous accounts and deeds of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to London's current obsessions and pre-occupations from nail parlours to drug abuse. The museum possesses two of the original plates for the Copperplate Map of c.1559, and the master version of the first Booth Map of Poverty (1888-89), perhaps the most famous map of the entire 19th century. The Tangye Collection of Cromwelliana includes many rare books and manuscripts such as holograph letters of Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, and the only known copy of the Journal of Cromwell's House of Lords from its inauguration to its last sitting (1657-59). Also of considerable significance are the King collections of toy theatre, tinsel prints and Valentine's cards, and the Kiralfy collection of material relating to the history of the White City exhibitions.

### **Oral Histories and Life Stories: c. 5000 hours of interviews**

The museum has been collecting the life histories and memories of Londoners since the 1980s. The collection includes important groups of recordings including the Port and River Sound Archive and the London History Workshop collection. Interviews focus on interviewees' working lives, labour relations, family life and childhood, community and social life, and the two world wars. Other recordings were made for The Peopling of London exhibition (1993-94) and London's Voices project (2005-06) which resulted in 200 life story interviews with Londoners from many different communities and backgrounds.

## Digital Collecting

In 2012, the museum's first Digital Collecting Framework was produced, reflecting our ambition to capture London's 'born-digital' culture. This has ranged from Londoners' social media conversations, to the representation of London in video games, to a digital visualisation representing the story of the Covid-19 pandemic. As this collecting has become standardised across our contemporary activities, we have begun to include born-digital material in our pre-existing collection areas. For example, the digital visualisation made during the Covid-19 pandemic forms part of the Art collection, while digital Covid-19 diaries form part of the Ephemera collection. In 2022, we created four new collection sections to take account of the sorts of primarily digital material being added to the collections. These new sections are: Sound, Moving Image, Social Media, and Video Games.

## 4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 The aims of the acquisitions programme are to:

- ensure the focused development of **the London Collection** to provide well-balanced and up-to-date coverage of London Museum's remit
- support the development of the New London Museum in West Smithfield, as well as to support the forward strategy of the London Museum Docklands
- to broaden the representation of Londoners' diversity within the collections
- to work with a wide variety of Londoner communities to help identify priority acquisitions
- enhance the content of the gallery and exhibition displays
- provide primary evidence and key secondary sources for research, publishing, broadcasting and other public needs

Over the next five years, the museum is preparing and moving its stored collections from London Wall to new storage in the Smithfield Phase II buildings, as well as at its external stores in Hackney and near Swindon. As part of this work, the museum is putting in place strategies to increase in-the-round access (i.e. physically, virtually and intellectually) to **the London Collection**.

4.2 Acquisition is the process of obtaining responsibility for an item, associated due diligence, rights management and transfer of title. In addition to items acquired for formal accession into the **Core Collection**, other items may be acquired to support the museum's collections, activities, and public programmes (**Supporting Collection**). The Core Collection consists of accessioned objects housed either within the history collections or the Archaeological Archive. The Supporting Collections includes items that the museum may wish to keep but not as part of the Core Collection (e.g. models, facsimiles, audio-visual content).

The term '**Learning Collection**' is applied to a group of objects specifically chosen for handling and teaching purposes. It is a mixture of accessioned objects from the Core Collection (specifically selected and approved for this purpose) and display assets and is stored separately.

4.3 Accession to the Core Collection is a status afforded to those items (material culture and digital culture) that London Museum deems to be of such significance that they merit permanent

retention and preservation. Acquisitions to all categories of the London Collection must demonstrate strong relevance to London.

In principle London Museum seeks to accession:

- Material which is important for the history of London
- Material which is important for the study of London
- Material which embodies or expresses powerful personal responses to or stories about London

4.4 Accession to the Supporting Collection is undertaken when the item in question merits retention, storage and use but does not fulfil the criteria necessary for inclusion in the Core Collection. Supporting collection items will be given an object record on the museum's collection database. Typically, items in the Supporting Collections fall into the following categories:

- archival objects (items that relate to Core Collection objects, e.g. a photograph of someone wearing an item in the Dress and Textile collections)
- auxiliary objects (items that allow the museum to display or use Core Collection objects, e.g. a games console to allow a video game in the collection to be shown)
- display assets (items collected to support exhibitions and galleries)
- handling assets (items to support the museum's learning and engagement programmes).

4.5 Materials added to the Museum Business Archive consist of papers, digital files and objects relating to the history, operations and organisation of London Museum and the earlier museum collections from which it was formed.

4.6 Collecting is either 'active' or more 'passive' in nature. Proactive projects involve the curatorial team identifying an object or thematic area that is of interest for the museum and pursuing acquisitions directly, sometimes in partnership with Londoners. More passive collecting occurs in response to the offer of material by members of the public or other institutions. However, in both instances collecting is a focused outcome of the formal review of the existing collection.

4.7 London Museum's **Content Framework** is central to how the museum develops its collection.

The framework sets out **the Content Universe**:

*The core chronology of London Museum stretches from around 10,000 years ago to this very moment, looking beyond these thresholds we consider what came before and what might come next.*

*Our heartland is the London Boroughs, we will follow their sphere of influence to the commuter belt, and where it ripples beyond to the ends of the earth.*

It also identifies four **Content Priorities**:

- **Global City:** *London transcends its role as capital. It is one of a handful of cities that can claim to be an economic giant, a political hub and cultural powerhouse that drives global markets, decision making and conversations. It has always been a world city and an international gateway for people and goods, exhibiting the very best and very worst of what a city can be.*

- **Iconic London:** *London icons are world famous. They are the places, people, things and events that are uniquely associated with London and form part of its identity. They can be both real and mythical influencing our perception of the city and our interaction with it. Iconic London continues to evolve as new symbols and faces of London emerge.*
- **City Now, City Future:** *London is a social laboratory. It is a focus for research, policy-making and public debate and an important source of data about how cities work. At the same time people are negotiating London day to day, experiencing those things that make city life attractive and challenging. By understanding the city we can start to imagine how London could change and influence its future.*
- **Creative Capital:** *Creativity is a key characteristic of London. This city has hosted both famous and little-known talents who have created a rich back catalogue of cultural work stretching back hundreds if not thousands of years. Londoners have also been at the forefront of technological and productive creativity, responding to the opportunities and problems of city life.*

These priorities are deliberately broadly-defined. Passive collecting will continue to take place within these priority guidelines. However, in terms of active collecting, these broader topics require greater refinement. This need will guide our active collecting. To this end, active collecting will focus on the following areas/topics, each of which emerges from the Content Priorities:

- **Contemporary London / Rapid Response**  
The museum engages with the issues and stories of contemporary London, working with partners across the city to acquire key objects that reflect the London of right now, and the lived experiences of those who live here
- **Untold histories / Contested histories / Alternative histories**  
The museum finds surprising objects that challenge our assumptions about the past, and give voice to those who are often overlooked or marginalised
- **London and the World / The World in London**  
The museum acquires objects that demonstrate how London is at the centre of world-wide networks and stories, which reflect London's influence on the wider world, for good and ill
- **London's key moments**  
The museum acquires objects that enhance our understanding of key, iconic moments in the city's history

To supplement the **Content Framework**, and to act as a guide in assessing collecting, a Collecting Framework exists. This sets out detailed descriptions of current holdings in each area of the collections, along with aspirations for collecting. This is reviewed and updated by staff when necessary, with reference to current strategic objectives, and is signed off by the Collections Committee. The collecting framework will be revised following the publication of this Collections Development Policy. In addition, this revision of the Collections Development Policy has been expressly designed to interface with the new Research Strategy that will be produced during the coming financial year.

4.8 As a result of the preparatory work for the new museum project, the period 2023-26 assumes a freeze on most acquisition activity. The exceptions to this will be:

- Acquisitions forming part of the ACE-funded strands of collecting and engagement work
- Acquisitions that fill identified gaps in our representation of London's diversity, and its histories
- Acquisitions that represent outstanding in-the-moment opportunities

4.9 London Museum collects records and finds ('archives') from archaeological projects throughout Greater London, provided that they comply with the general aims of the acquisitions programme (Section 4.1 above). Such archives must be prepared in accordance with the detailed standards published on our website, and fieldwork projects initiated since 1 May 2013 are liable to deposition fees (though these may be waived if the work was carried out by amateur or academic organisations). To date, collection of archaeological archives has been holistic and all-encompassing. However, due to the extraordinary volume of excavations, this trajectory cannot continue. The museum is working towards requiring archaeological contractors to use the CIFA Selection Toolkit on all sites. Sites initiated prior to this requirement will still need a selection strategy agreed upon with the museum before the archiving starts. The acquisition of archaeological site archives is governed by the London Museum Deposition Standards and Archive Policies published on the museum website.

4.10 The acquisition of human remains is governed by London Museum's Policy for the Care of Human Remains' and the deposition standards..

4.11 For the museum, the archaeological and historical context of an item, together with the information associated with it, is of fundamental importance. It is this that determines the item's value to the museum rather than aesthetic or technological criteria alone. Normally, items are only acquired when they can satisfy the requirements of a strong London context.

## **5 Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

5.3 The themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal are as follows:

- 5.3.1 The museum has an ongoing programme of review and rationalisation in relation to hazardous materials.

- 5.3.2 The museum has begun to conduct systematic and formal collections reviews ahead of the move to a new site. As part of these reviews, consideration will be given to rationalisation and disposal. This includes review and rationalisation of large collections stored at London Museum Stores, as part of the transformation of this space to support the museum's exit from London Wall.
- 5.3.3 During the Archaeological Archive project, there will be a careful and considered reduction of the holdings. As knowledge of London's archaeology has grown we are in a position to identify elements suitable for disposal. These potentially include unstratified finds, degraded iron finds, animal bone from contexts that have high amounts of residual and intrusive pottery and some marine shell.

## **6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items**

- 6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal. The museum will develop its approach to ethics as part of the Research Centre strand of activity.
- 6.2 The museum is empowered to develop its collections under the terms of the Museum of London Acts, 1965 and 1968 (amended by the GLA Act 2007).
- 6.3 Under the terms of the Museum of London Act 1965, the Board has powers to sell, exchange, give away or otherwise dispose of any object comprised in the collection if it is a duplicate or is for any reason not, in the Board's opinion, required for retention, provided this is not inconsistent with any trust or condition attached to the object. Similarly, the Board may transfer any object, with any trust or condition attached thereto, to a national museum as listed in the National Heritage Act 1992.
- 6.4 The museum will assert title in all its collections. It will formally agree terms of copyright and reproduction rights with copyright holders, where appropriate. The museum has a detailed copyright policy.
- 6.5 When acquiring works in copyright, the museum will seek, wherever possible, to acquire a copyright licence for at least non-commercial rights to enable the museum to promote the history of London through education, participation and interpretation. Where this is not possible, the museum will take a risk based approach to the reproduction of objects in copyright.

## **7 Collecting policies of other museums**

- 7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

- 7.2.1 It is recognised that the capital's cultural heritage is preserved in a network of museums and other public collections, notably: bodies run by the City of London - the Guildhall Art Gallery, Guildhall Library and London Metropolitan Archives; London's borough museums; national museums and cultural bodies such as the British Film Institute.
- 7.2.2 For objects or collections of demonstrable local interest, there is a presumption in favour of London borough museums, which are assumed to have 'first refusal' rights for objects from their areas. Where appropriate, the museum will actively draw the attention of borough museums to such objects or direct potential donors to their local museum.
- 7.2.3 The museum has a non-mandatory regional role for the storage of archaeological material but not for any other type of item. It nevertheless supports strategic regional collecting initiatives, for example through subject-based networks. The museum recognises that regional benefit may become a stronger factor in future collecting decisions.

## **8 Archival holdings**

- 8.1 The museum's ephemera collection has long held material loosely described as 'archives': the Suffragette Archive, for example.
- 8.2 The Museum holds other isolated archive collections relating to subjects explored in the museum's Docklands galleries.
- 8.3 The museum is responsible for two formal archives on long-term loan: the Port of London Authority Archive and the Sainsbury Archive.
- 8.4 The Sainsbury Archive is held under a separate arrangement, and is not governed by this policy framework. These collections are publicly accessible through the Sainsbury Study Centre.
- 8.5 The museum's Library is primarily an information resource for staff but does hold special collections of rare books, manuscripts and maps. The Library also includes the Port of London Authority's book collection, an historical loan to the museum. Books acquired as historical artefacts in their own right are subject to the Museum's acquisition procedure and policy, as set out here.
- 8.6 The Museum Business Archive documents the history of London Museum and its predecessor institutions, The London Museum (1911) and to a lesser extent, the Guildhall Museum. London Museum is designated a Place of Deposit by The National Archives in relation to its holdings for The London Museum (1911). The Business Archive actively collects original material, both in hard copy and electronically, from departments and external donors which document the history of the organisation's governance, curatorial and operational activities, as well as collections of papers of former staff members.
- 8.7 Other archives are only acquired in exceptional circumstances. The museum has a limited capacity to look after archives and only acquires business, personal or institutional archives

where it is able to manage these archives and make them accessible to a standard consistent with professional archival practice. The museum has no aspiration to develop its archive holdings to rival London's existing Archives and Record Offices and will only acquire specific items on a case by case basis.

8.8 Archives considered for acquisition must relate to the museum's existing archive collections, or the subject interests and development aspirations of London Museum Docklands. The interests of relevant local archives, such as Tower Hamlets, will be respected. This scope includes:

- London's port and river
- Slavery, the sugar trade and London's Caribbean connections
- Additions to existing archival materials held in the ephemera collections (for example, the Suffragettes)

8.9 More general archive material is referred to The London Archives or the appropriate borough record offices. However, this does not preclude the museum's curatorial staff acquiring photographs, items of ephemera and recorded media material, which are classed by the museum as 'museum objects' rather than 'archives'.

8.10 Where the museum holds or intends to acquire archives it is guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums in the United Kingdom (2002)

8.11 The Library does not collect rare books or other historic printed items that are better housed elsewhere; furthermore, it seeks not to duplicate items that are easily accessible in other public collections. More information can be found in the Library's own collecting policy.

## 9 Acquisition

9.1 The museum has formal Acquisition and Disposal Procedures. Acquisitions are considered by the Collections Committee who have delegated authority from the Board to assess, approve or decline new acquisitions, and to recommend disposals. Acquisitions are reported to the Board of Governors annually. Except in exceptional circumstances, all disposals from the Core Collections have to be first approved by the Board of Governors.

9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded.

The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

- 9.4 Objects are not accepted on long-term loan, other than in exceptional circumstances, for example as key items for display in the galleries; or as part of archival deposits. Refer to the [Loan In Policy](#) for further guidance.

## **10 Human remains**

- 10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains more than 100 years old, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.
- 10.2 The museum maintains a Policy for the Care of Human Remains in the London Museum Collections.

## **11 Biological and geological material**

- 11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of a national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

## **12 Archaeological material**

- 12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.
- 12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

## **13 Exceptions**

- 13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:
- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
  - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

## **14 Spoliation**

14.1 The museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999.

## **15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

15.1 The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return objects, specimens or human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005) to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

15.3 The deaccessioning of Core Collection items for ethical reasons, including repatriation and restitution, will be considered on a case by case by case basis, in line with the Museum Association's 'Code of Ethics', 'Supporting Decolonisation Guidance', and 'Toolkit for Ethical Disposal'; along with Arts Council England's 'Restitution and Repatriation: A Practical Guide'.

## **16 Disposal procedures**

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.

16.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.

16.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained where relevant, and the views of stakeholders such as

donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

- 16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial and conservation staff, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Arts Council England
- 16.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

### ***Disposal by destruction***

- 16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.