

Collections Management Policy

1. Introduction

We're here to enrich the understanding and appreciation of London and all its people – past, present, future.

In doing this, we aspire to be a force for good in London, as London must be for the world.

Our strategic plan provides the roadmap for all that we do for the next five years and will take us up to the opening of the New Museum in West Smithfield.

Our strategic objectives for the period 2018 - 2023 are to:

1. Reach more people
2. Become better known
3. Stretch thinking
4. Engage every school child
5. Stand on our own two feet

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 new Content Framework is reshaping 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 current strategic objectives we are committed to increasing access (intellectually, physically and digitally), improving the care and storage of the collections, reviewing significance and rationalising, enhancing the information we hold and intellectually developing them. 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.

2. Key principles

The Museum will establish, develop and maintain an appropriate Collections Management Framework which seeks to:

- Protect the Museum’s collections and ensure responsible stewardship in line with the relevant legislation, professional codes of practice and national standards.
- Ensure we are meeting the standards required by the Accreditation Scheme and benchmarks for collections care.
- Ensure that we create and maintain accurate information about all collections management activities and material.
- Provide a framework for setting and reviewing collections related objectives in line with the Museum’s mission, purpose and strategic objectives.
- Balance the needs of current and future generations and those of access and preservation.
- Be “holistic, integrated and proportional”* in line with sector standards.

3. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out the standards by which the Museum will manage its collections. It should be read in conjunction with the associated policies and procedures listed in section 8 of this document. Together they comprise our overall framework for managing collections at an organisational level.

The policy applies to all acquired collections and those on loan to the Museum whether short or long term.

4. Definition of terms

Collections management: strategies, policies, processes and procedures relating to a collection’s development, information, access and care.*

Conservation: interventive techniques applied to an item to achieve chemical and physical stability, or surfaced cleaning to enhance its condition or some aspect of its significance for study and interpretation.*

Collection care: activities intended to safeguard a collection.*

(*definitions taken or adapted from the PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management BSI)

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Directorate

In conjunction with the Board of Governors, the Director and Executive Board are responsible for ensuring that the Museum establishes, documents and maintains an appropriate collections management framework and continually seeks to improve its effectiveness.

5.2 Collections Plan Board

The Collections Plan Board (chaired by the Assistant Director of Content) are responsible for the operation of the Collections Management Framework and associated policies and procedures, agreeing changes to this policy and associated procedures as well as overseeing the implementation of them. For some policies further authorisation may be required by either Executive Board or the Board of Governors.

5.3 *Line Managers*

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff (permanent, temporary, contract or voluntary) comply with this policy, the Collections Management Framework and the related procedures.

5.4 *Employees*

Compliance with this policy, the Collections Management Framework and the associated procedures is a requirement for all employees, contractors and volunteers.

6. **Policy**

6.1 *General framework*

The Museum will establish, document and maintain an appropriate collections management framework.

The framework will be comprised of the following:

- Collections Management Policy (this document)
- Collections Development Policy (and associated processes and procedures)
- Collections Access Policy (and associated processes and procedures)
- Conservation and Collections Policy (and associated processes and procedures)

In addition to the above the Museum will maintain the following:

- A specific policy on the acquisition, care and curation of human remains.
- Core collections management procedures as identified by Spectrum namely, object entry and exit, acquisition, disposal, location and movement control, cataloguing loans in and loans out, loss, theft and audit.
- Key conservation and collection care policies and procedures (for full list see the Conservation and Collection Care Policy).

6.2 *Governance and strategy*

The Museum will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Museum's obligations towards the collections.
- Conduct regular reviews and updates at specified intervals of all collections management policies and procedures.
- Carry out internal audits of the collections management framework and related procedures at regular intervals to validate their effectiveness.

With the exception of this policy and the Collections Development Policy (which require Board level sign off) all policies, procedures and processes that comprise the Collections Management Framework will be reviewed and authorised by the Collections Plan Board. For some policy changes, the Museum Executive Board approval may be required, for example if changes necessitate substantial additional resource.

6.3 Conservation and Collection Care

The Museum seeks:

- To provide an optimum climate of temperature, relative humidity, light levels and air quality in a pest free environment that achieves a satisfactory compromise between the long-term preservation of the objects and accessibility for users and staff.
- To include the consideration of the care of collections in all museum developments and projects.
- To provide storage and display conditions that meet current collections care standards (as defined by Benchmarking standards, national security standards and government indemnity standards where appropriate) in order to maintain all collections in a state of high protection and security.
- To ensure that all objects are displayed, housed, moved and handled in a manner which avoids unnecessary physical or chemical changes resulting in unacceptable damage
- To ensure that the risk of accidental and deliberate damage or loss to objects are minimised
- To ensure that all procedures and conservation treatments are documented following established procedures and the national documentation standard as set out in Spectrum.

6.4 Conservation Treatments

- All conservation work must be co-ordinated via the Department of Conservation and Collection Care.
- Interventive treatments if deemed necessary should first be agreed with the designated curator or specialist.
- For loan in items, or objects that are in the care of the Museum, permission is sought from the owner or their designated representative before any work commences.
- Only those private practitioners or organisations with the appropriate qualifications and experience will be used for work on the Museum's collection. In most circumstances this will require them to be on the ICON Conservation Register.

6.5 Emergency procedures

The Museum takes risk mitigation measures over and above those necessary for the day-to-day protection of its collections, providing emergency arrangements and facilities in the event of disastrous damage (as from flood, fire etc.). These measures include:

- Provision of a comprehensive Collections Emergency Plan covering all sites as part of the Museum's overall Emergency Procedures.
- Provision of appropriate training in collections emergency protection and response and providing suitable equipment and materials in emergency cupboards at all sites.
- Identification of external bodies whose services may be used in specific emergency situation.
- Provision of Business Continuity Team.

6.6 *Security*

- Arrangements for the security of collections are an integral part of collections management policy and procedures. The Museum has a dedicated security team and takes regular advice from the National Museum Security Advisor.
- The Museum has a Security Working Group that regularly reviews security procedures and practices.
- The Museum will maintain a risk register for collections security as part of its overall management of risk.

6.7 *Information and documentation*

- The Museum is committed to the use of national and international standards for the documentation of its collections. The Museum's standards and procedures are based on SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard, published by the Collections Trust.
- The Museum uses the collections management system MIMSY XG as its primary database supplemented by other electronic and written records.
- The Museum manages collections documentation work via a three year rolling strategy, the Collections Information Strategy and the aforementioned Collections Plan.
- The Museum maintains a Collections Information Policy which outlines the standards and benchmarks used to guide the documentation of the collection.

6.8 *Insurance*

- For practical and economic reasons and in common with many museums the collection, when in its normal locations on the main museum sites (or in transportation from one museum site to another), is not insured.
- The policy for loans in is that they are insured by the Museum's commercial insurers or under the UK Government Indemnity Scheme, The exceptions to this are historic loans where the lender cannot be traced, and the Lord Mayor's State Coach and the Sainsbury's and PLA archives which are subject to special insurance arrangements. The Museum also maintains separate cover for the conservation treatment of borrowed works up to a limit per work (and subject to the approval of the lender).
- The policy for loans out is for the lender to provide insurance except in exceptional circumstances or during short-term exits, when the Museum may arrange cover via its commercial insurers.

6.9 *Compliance with standards and codes of practice*

The Museum aims to comply with the following national and international standards/guidelines and codes of ethics:

- Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums: DCMS 2005
- Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom: Accreditation Standard, 2011
- Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums Libraries and Archives V2.0
- National Archives Standards Framework and PD5454: 2012
- SPECTRUM: UK Museums Documentation Standard
- PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management
- PAS 198:2011 Specification for environmental conditions for cultural collections
- BS ISO 15489-1 Records Management
- BS EN 15757 2010 Conservation of cultural property specifications for temperature & relative humidity
- Museums Association Code of Ethics for Museums
- ICON Professional Code of Ethics
- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004
- CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)
- NMDC Combating Illicit Trade guidelines
- DCMS Dealing in Tainted Cultural Objects guidance, 2003
- UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA): Codes, standards and guidelines
- UK Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for Non-National Institutions, 2016
- Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

6.10 Competency training and awareness

The Museum will ensure that it routinely identifies and training needs associated with collections work and puts in place the appropriate training and other actions.

7. Guidance on supporting procedures, related policies and the regulatory environment

7.1 Regulatory Environment

The regulatory environment for Collections Management is complex because it covers many areas for example health and safety at work, information legislation and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. Therefore this policy does not detail the relevant legislation in full, instead the key pieces of legislation are listed below and full details of all pertaining legislation can be found in the relevant sub-policies listed below. (See individual policies for more detail).

7.2 Legislation

- Museum of London Acts, 1965 and 1968 (amended by the GLA Act 2007).
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001
- Control of Explosives Regulations 2014

- Ionising Radiation Regulations 1999
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information 2000
- Copyright and Patents Act 1988

7.3 *Related Policies*

The following sub-policies are related to this one and comprise our overall framework for managing collections:

- Collections Development Policy
 - Policy for the Care of Human Remains in London Museum Collections
 - Due Diligence Policy
- Collections Access Policy
 - Access to, and invigilation of, collections policy
 - Object movement policy
- Conservation and Collection Care Policy
 - Integrated pest management policy
 - Collections environment policy
 - Collections lighting policy
 - Events in galleries and stores policy
 - Analysis and sampling policy
- Collections Information Policy

7.4 *Related Procedures*

- Acquisition
- Disposal
- Loss and Theft
- Loans In
- Loans Out
- Object movement
- Object exit
- Object Entry
- Audit
- Hazardous Collections
- Standard Operating Procedure – Controlled Drugs (V4.0 2016)
- Analysis and sampling procedure
- Object damage procedure
- Due Diligence checklist