

SMG Collection Information & Access Policy

This Policy is part of the Science Museum Group's Collections Management Policy framework, which consists of:

- SMG Collection Development Strategy
- SMG Collection Information and Access Policy
- SMG Conservation Policy

1. Purpose of Policy

- 1.1 Under the National Heritage Act 1983, the Board of Trustees of the Science Museum is responsible for: the care, preservation and development of their collections; for making them available to the public by exhibition, study and research; and to promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of science and technology.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the principles by which the Science Museum Group of museums (the Science Museum, London, the Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester, the National Railway Museum, York and Shildon, and the National Media Museum, Bradford) will take responsibility for, and ensures that there are effective arrangements for, collections information management and access to the SMG Collection ("the Collection"), in line with the SMG's strategic ambitions and in proportion to resources available. This will:
 - Improve accountability for the Collection and collection information;
 - Meet or exceed minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and for collection information and access;
 - Extend access to the Collections and collection information including facilitating physical and intellectual access on site and online, and by incoming and outgoing loans; and
 - Strengthen the security of the collections through accurate collection information.
- 1.3 The following definitions are set out in the PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management (British Standards Institution):

Collection Information
Information an organisation collects, creates, holds and maintains about its collection and/or collected items.
Note: collections information can include a broad range of knowledge, such as interpretation, stories, research and recorded conversation.

Collection access
Right, opportunity or means of finding, using [including borrowing] or approaching collection items and/or information about items.
- 1.4 The SMG's approach to the security of information assets is set out in the ICT Policy, 2013 and ITG002 – Information Risk Policy, Provisions for maintaining the confidentiality, integrity & accessibility of information, 2014.

2. Collections Information Principles

- 2.1 The SMG Collection includes both physical and digital collection items. Information about objects in the Collection and associated intellectual property is key to managing and enabling access.
- 2.2 The Collection Management Systems and Digital Media Library are the primary tools for creating and managing collections information. The SMG is committed to creating and maintaining good quality information and maintaining accurate location information for collection items, which conforms to national standards, as far as possible, such as SPECTRUM: UK Documentation Standard for Museums. All the museums in the SMG are accredited through the Arts Council England Accreditation Scheme. To qualify museums must meet standards on how they are managed, for the services they offer and on how they care for the collections.

- 2.3 Collection Information enables accountability for items for which SMG is legally responsible, including permanent collection items, loans to SMG, un-acquisitioned and previously undocumented items. In this way SMG ensures that it documents object acquisition, accession, de-accession and transfer of objects, and provides inventory and audit, and location and movement control. SMG will hold basic data on every object so that it can be uniquely identified and the collection audited regularly. The Heads of Collections/Head Curators are responsible for the creation of records for items entering the Collection, and managers in all relevant departments are responsible for ensuring that records of items are updated whenever a relevant procedure is carried out.
- 2.4 Collection Information will be created, managed and upgraded to an appropriate level for objects and archives. Documentation backlogs will be identified, prioritised and addressed as resources permit in accordance with Documentation Plans.
- 2.5 Digital Collection items (objects, images, audio, video) will be catalogued in the appropriate CMS, in the same way as physical items, and the digital 'master' or item, managed and preserved in line with the SMG's Storage Review and Strategy (in development), which will support the digitization and preservation of the Collection and the hosting of business applications.
- 2.6 The SMG digitizes Collection items, as resources permit and will develop a Preservation Plan. Digital images of objects will be catalogued and stored in the appropriate system, the SMG Digital Media Library (a digital asset management system). A Digital Preservation Strategy will be developed, specifying how digital Collection items will be managed and preserved.
- 2.7 Collection audit verifies the presence and information status of collection items as recorded in the Collection Management System (CMS). The Group Head of Collections Services is responsible for ensuring that regular audits of the Collection are planned and implemented. Documentation about the Collection is made available for inspection by the Museum's auditors upon request.
- 2.8 The Head of ICT and the Group Head of Collections Services are responsible for ensuring that periodic reviews of the Collection Management Systems and Digital Media Library are carried out to ensure that they are fit for purpose and that collection information is appropriately safeguarded for the future. In line with the ICT Strategy there are periodic reviews of every business system and of supplier contracts.

3. **Collection Access**

- 3.1 The SMG is committed to enabling access to collections items, physically and digitally, in accordance with the SMG Conservation Policy, 2013 and the SMG Digital Strategy, 2015.
- 3.2 To enable access, appreciation and understanding of the Collection, SMG creates and presents a broad range of exhibitions, displays and touring exhibitions, alongside a range of learning programmes and content on the SMG Museums' websites and social media channels.
- 3.3 The SMG provides online access to the Collection through SMG Museums' websites, and via Collections Online (objects), Adlib Online, (archives) and Koha (library material). These are updated as new information (text and images) become available, and where no rights or data restrictions apply. Arrangements to use collection information (text and images) for commercial purposes may be made through SCMG Enterprises Limited. SMG will adopt permissive, 'open' content licenses – such as Creative Commons – that enable non-commercial reuse of images and metadata, while protecting the commercial use of its assets.

- 3.4 Objects from the Collection held in SMG stores may be viewed by appointment. Access is only restricted for objects that are hazardous to health or subject to applicable legislative requirements.
- 3.5 SMG staff have a duty of care to protect sensitive or confidential collection information, in accordance with UK legal regulations. All public requests for information are considered in terms of compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and The Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Requests are reviewed for confidential data, such as donor information and environmental information on a case by case basis, and in accordance with applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

4 Due Diligence

- 4.1 The SMG follows the principles set out in Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on Collecting and Borrowing Cultural Material (DCMS, 2005) which defines due diligence as the necessary precaution that museums take to ensure that they only acquire, borrow or lend ethically acceptable material.
- 4.2 The SMG will not acquire or borrow any object unless it is satisfied that the owner/lender has good legal title and they or any agent acting for them has full legal authority to enter into an agreement with the Museum.
- 4.3 The Director of the Science Museum Group has overall responsibility, which is delegated to the Heads of Collections/Head Curators at each SMG Museum, for ensuring that the appropriate due diligence procedures are carried out. Particular attention is paid to object provenance between 1933 and 1945.
- 4.4 The SMG complies with all relevant national and international regulations governing the import and export of cultural property, the control of trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna and adheres to the Museums Association Code of Ethics.
- 4.5 The SMG is committed to the appropriate use of human remains and tissues in display and research contexts and that there are particular sensitivities surrounding the display, documentation, and storage of remains. As such, the Museums follow the recommendations in the Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (DCMS, 2005) under the Human Tissue Act 2004 legislation.
- 4.6 The Science Museum is able to provide immunity from seizure for cultural objects that are on loan from overseas under Part 6 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

5 Lending and Borrowing

- 5.1 Under the National Heritage Act 1983 and the Museums and Galleries Act 1992 the Board of Trustees has the power to lend items from the SMG Collection and to borrow items.
- 5.2 Loaning objects from the Collection is a key component of the organisation's National and International Strategies.

- 5.3 The SMG loan activity increases:
- Access to the Collection, knowledge and expertise to a wider public both nationally and internationally.
 - The quantity and quality of collections knowledge and research.
 - National and international co-operation and partnership.
 - The profile and reputation of SMG nationally and internationally.
- 5.4 The following criteria will be used to assess a loan request from SMG:
- A minimum notice period of six months is required for UK loans and nine months for international loans;
 - Whether the borrower is able to meet all costs and initial conditions;
 - Whether the proposed loan will widen access to the SMG's collection;
 - Whether the proposed loan will increase knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the SMG's collection;
 - Relevance and status of the requested object/s to the proposed exhibition/ display/event;
 - Availability of the object/s including whether it is required for current or forthcoming SMG programme and/or whether it is already on loan or promised to another venue. Items on permanent display in SMG museums are only loaned in exceptional cases;
 - Whether the object/s condition is suitable for the required travel and display;
 - The suitability of the proposed venue to exhibit the objects securely and in appropriate conditions;
 - The SMG's capacity to facilitate the loan of the object/s;
 - Charges for non-commercial UK loans are made where appropriate on a cost recovery basis in line with the Loans Between National and Non-national Museums new standards and practical guidelines (NMDC, 2003).
- 5.6 The following criteria will be used when the SMG borrows items:
- A minimum notice period of six months is preferred for UK loans and nine months for international loans;
 - Resources should be identified by SMG and be available to facilitate the loan;
 - The suitability of the SMG's display environment and ability to meet the owner's loan conditions;
 - A loan should be for the purpose for inclusion in a special exhibition or gallery display;
 - Items may be placed on loan to SMG prior to acquisition;
 - Loans must be objects not otherwise available from the SMG collections;
 - Loans must be demonstrably beneficial to the SMG displays or research;
 - That there is an appropriate level of public access.
- 5.7 Authority for the authorisation of loans (from and to SMG Museums) is delegated by the Board to the Director, SMG, and in turn to the Heads of Collections/Head Curators at SMG Museums. Decisions will be made in consultation with the Registrar, SMG, and the Heads of Exhibitions/Public Programmes at SMG Museums. The Registrar, SMG, may be delegated authority to authorise loans by the Heads of Collections/Head Curators at SMG.
- 5.8 The Registrar, SMG, has overall responsibility for the administration and recording of loans, and ensuring that transport and security arrangements for each loan are of a standard appropriate to the value and significance of the material. The provision of information and undertaking of actions to facilitate loans is the responsibility of all staff carrying out relevant procedures.

- 5.9 Where objects are lent or borrowed for longer periods, the Registrar, SMG, is responsible for ensuring that the loan is reviewed at intervals normally of three years, that valuations are updated, and that the conditions of loan including insurance or indemnity arrangements continue to be satisfied. Insurance and indemnity arrangements will be reviewed annually for objects deemed high risk by virtue of their valuation or other assessment by the Registrar, SMG.

6 **Policy Implementation**

- 6.1 Managers in all relevant departments must ensure that the Collections Management Policy framework and supporting procedures for the management and care of the collections are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.
- 6.2 All staff responsible for creating and managing collections information will receive the appropriate training to create documentation in accordance with Museum information management procedures. Collection Information will be accurately input in a timely way that is retrievable and auditable. The Group Head of Collections Services is responsible for ensuring that training is available, and managers in all relevant departments are responsible for ensuring that their staff receive training.