

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

Old Town Hall Museum

(Hastings Borough Council)

Collection Management Policy

Date of approval: January 2015

Date of Review: January 2016

1.0 Statement of Purpose

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery's collections are at the heart of what we do. There are over 95,000 objects covering art, archaeology, world cultures, natural sciences, social and local history. The documentation and care of our collections is central to delivering our service aims as detailed in our statement of purpose:

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery (HMAG) aims to fulfil its core role in the preservation, collection, documentation and interpretation of the collections associated with the history and natural history of the area, the fine arts and from a wider cultural context. Visitors and other users will be at the heart of what we do, and we believe that our collections have the power to educate and inspire people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and the local communities we serve.

2.0 Documentation

2.1 Commitment to Documentation

HMAG is committed to ensuring that all its collections and loans are documented on the collections database (currently MODES XML) to the Accreditation standard and are SPECTRUM compliant.

2.2 Policy Aims

The aim of the policy is to ensure that HMAG fulfils its responsibility to safeguard its collections and to make them accessible to the public. The policy will ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable, consistent and accessible. We aim to:

- Improve accountability for the collections
- Maintain at least the minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information
- Extend access to collection information
- Strengthen the security of the collections

2.3 Ethics and Legislation

HMAG will take account of all relevant ethical guidelines and legislation in documenting collections including Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. We will also abide by the standards of the Museum Association Code of Ethics.

2.4 Cataloguing Standards

HMAG will maintain at least the minimum level of collections documentation that allows us to identify and locate all items for which we are legally responsible, including loans. We are committed to following SPECTRUM, the UK Collections Management Standard for all primary procedures:

- Object Entry
- Acquisition

- Loan In
- Loan Out
- Location and Movement Control
- Cataloguing
- Object Exit

The minimum level of object cataloguing is identified as Inventory level, and is applied particularly to retrospective documentation. The record of each object (or group of closely related items e.g. bulk archaeology) will contain:

- Accession number
- Number of items
- Simple object name
- Brief description
- Acquisition history (date, method) or recorded as found in documentation backlog as 'untraced find'
- Location
- Record creation information e.g. recorder, date

All new acquisitions will be given more detailed records where possible, including the fields described above plus any of the following:

- Other historical numbers
- Identification information
- Object description information (e.g. dimensions, material, colour, sex)
- Production information
- Field collection information
- Reproduction (e.g. digital image file)
- Other historical information or notes

The Museum will not add to its retrospective documentation backlog, and all new acquisitions will be documented within 3 months.

HMAG will continue to eliminate the Museum's documentation backlog, and to resolve discrepancies between inventory records and existing documentation. A Documentation Plan has been produced which includes dealing with the backlog, and is included in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

2.5 Security of Data

HMAG will ensure the physical security of the records in the documentation systems, and their long-term preservation, whether paper or digital. We will update manual and digital records as appropriate.

Daily back-ups are made of digital databases and back-up copies held away from the Museum building.

Security copies are maintained of the manual Accession Registers and held at a different site from the originals.

HMAG will maintain our computerised database (currently MODES XML) to ensure it does not become obsolete. We will ensure that programme updates are applied as they become available from the software supplier so that we have full technical support.

2.6 Access to Collections Information

HMAG is committed to ensuring that our documentation allows access to information for staff and researchers. We are working towards improving access in areas where it is not possible because of the backlog.

Some information will always be treated as confidential, such as donor information, valuations and location details. All requests for access to information on collections will be considered in terms of compliance with relevant legislation, including Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts, and any legal agreements, conditions of gift, copyright or other restrictions.

3.0 Collection Care and Conservation

3.1 Commitment to Collection Care

Hastings Museum and Art gallery is committed to ensuring that all its collections and loans are cared for to nationally recognised standards of best practice including the Accreditation standard.

3.2 Policy Aims

The aim of the policy is to ensure that HMAG fulfils its fundamental duty to care for its collections based on a combination of preventive and remedial conservation designed to ensure long-term preservation, within the resources available.

- Preventive conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects, specimens and structures.
- Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

3.3 Collection overview

The Museum will survey, benchmark and visually inspect the conditions in which collections are kept to determine priority areas for improvement in line with best practice as defined by *Benchmarks in Collections Care* and the SPECTRUM procedures. The condition for all HMAG collections will, as a minimum, meet or exceed the 'basic level' requirements of *Benchmarks in Collections Care*.

3.4 Provision of suitable building conditions

The Museum is currently operated from three sites that are robust and fit for the purpose of housing collections.

Collections are safeguarded through the management of the following systems:

- Building Maintenance
- Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) Maintenance
- Building Management Systems
- Intruder Alarms
- Fire and Evacuation Systems

All relevant M&E systems will be covered by service contracts and inspected periodically. Any M&E maintenance work will include considering collection care and collection staff will be involved in any decisions concerning alterations to the status quo e.g. changes to type or numbers of lights.

3.5 Environmental Monitoring

The Museum will:

- Monitor the environment in storage and display areas, to measure and record relative humidity (RH), temperature, visible light and ultraviolet radiation (UV) where applicable.
- Collect environmental data using continuous recording systems and hand held meters.
- Collate, utilise and act upon data to provide stable and appropriate collection environments.
- Monitor, manage and eradicate pests through good housekeeping.
- Balance the consumption of food and drink in its buildings as part of users' experience while ensuring these do not put collections at risk.

3.6 Environmental control

HMAG will store and display collections in suitable environments that minimise their rate of deterioration, while recognising that it is not always possible to control one or more of the environmental factors within a store or display.

Control factors and methods:

- **Relative humidity (RH) and temperature:** Due to the nature of the Museum building and its heating, RH tends to be low and temperature high compared with the ideal for general mixed media collections (40-60% RH with less than a 10% fluctuation in any 24 hour period, and 18–25 centigrade). The stores are generally within the desired limits for RH, although may be colder in the winter and hotter in the summer.
- **RH and temperature controlled locations:** In areas that are controlled using air conditioning equipment, RH is held to 53% +/-2%.
- **Visible light:** 50–250 lux, depending on the light sensitivity of the object and duration of its annual light exposure; controlled by use of blinds and shutters to eliminate daylight and by use of appropriate

artificial lighting.

- **UV radiation:** less than 75mW/lm (microwatts per lumen), controlled by eliminating unfiltered daylight and using bulbs that do not emit UV.
- **Display case construction:** where appropriate, objects on display will be cased, which buffers against damaging environmental fluctuation. Internal case environments may be tailored to suit the objects within, for example silica gel buffering material or other internal controls may be used, where necessary, to maintain a higher or lower RH. Lighting will be controlled to prevent heat build-up and excessive light levels. Case environments will be inert in accordance with case specifications produced by collection team. Case fabrics will be selected to ensure they are suitable and do not release pollutants.
- **Storage:** where practicable, stored collections will be housed in cupboards, inert crates or boxes to protect against dust. Store areas should be suitable for purpose with good physical access.

3.7 Housekeeping

The Museum will continue the following housekeeping processes:

- **Cleaning**
Housekeeping programmes will be established and followed in line with action plans. Staff will clean storage and display areas in a way that is not detrimental to the collections.
- **Pest management**
Storage and display areas will be monitored regularly using insect traps and random visual checks. Should pests be detected, the trap contents will be recorded and the area monitored rigorously to locate and eradicate the source.

3.8 Handling, moving and transport

Museum objects are particularly at risk when being moved or handled. HMAG will:

- Assess whether the moving or handling an object is necessary and could be avoided.
- Move its objects safely and securely
- Plan and risk-assess the movement of large or awkward items.
- Method statements will be produced by the responsible curator.
- All objects that are transported will be suitably wrapped or crated to give them the most suitable protection, as specified by the responsible curator.
- Ensure that manual handling equipment is risk-assessed and well maintained.

3.9 Emergency planning and staff training

The Museum will produce emergency plans for all venues housing museum collections. These will be regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.

Staff will receive training as appropriate following amendments and at regular intervals to ensure they are aware of procedures and their individual responsibilities.

3.10 Security

The Museum will have an expert assessment of security arrangements at least once every five years. This is a requirement of the Museum Accreditation scheme. HMAG will act on this advice and draw up an action plan. The Museum will risk assess the security of objects put on display with particular consideration to objects on open display.

3.11 Remedial Conservation

Remedial conservation is the active treatment of an object to stabilise its condition, or to enhance its condition, or some aspect of its significance for study and interpretation. The first priority is preventive conservation; remedial conservation is the last resort.

Where remedial work is necessary the museum will work in accordance with the following principles:

- Suitably qualified and experienced staff. Only appropriately qualified and experienced conservators and collections care staff will be employed to carry out conservation work. External conservators should be accredited with The Institute of Conservation's Conservation Register.
- Documentation of condition and treatment. All conservation work will be carried out to a written brief and treatment will be photographed and recorded.

3.12 Expertise, advice and services

HMAG is committed to continuing professional development of its staff and to the building of relevant knowledge and expertise. Caring for the collections is the responsibility of all staff. All guidelines and information relating to collections care practices and procedures are held on the network drive which is accessible to all staff.

4.0 Ethics and Legislation

4.1 In caring for the collections the Museum will follow the relevant ethical guidelines and legislation:

- Museum Association Code of Ethics
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- COSHH Regulations 2002
- Care of Human Remains guidance 2005
- Fire Arms (Amendment) Act 1988
- Wildlife protection guidance

4.2 Health and Safety

HMAG has a duty of care to avoid exposing staff, volunteers and visitors to health and safety risks. All staff and volunteers will be made aware of our health and safety policy and practical safety issues.

4.3 Copyright and intellectual rights

The Museum respects the rights of copyright and intellectual rights owners and seeks to clarify and document any restrictions or permissions at the time of acquisition. Where full rights are not transferred to the Museum, the following will be recorded on the object's MODES record as required: the copyright holder; any licence to make copies (whether for exhibition, marketing, educational use, preservation, sale or merchandising); and the credits to be given.

5.0 Reference to other Policies and Plans

The following plans impact on the Museum's Collections Management Policy:

- Emergency Plan
- Forward Plan
- Collections Development Policy
- Access and Learning Policy
- Security Assessment and actions
- Volunteer Policy
- Documentation Procedure Manual