

Report To: Museum Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 9 September 2020

Report Title: Collections Report

Report By: Damian Etherington, Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Key Decision: N

Classification:

Purpose of Report

To update the committee on collections care, access, acquisitions, loans and objects being considered for rationalisation.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Introduction

1. This report outlines the collections related activities that have taken place at the museum since the last formal meeting of the committee.

Collections Care

2. Collections care has been maintained throughout lockdown, through regular onsite visits and remote monitoring of environmental conditions. Work has been on going to make the collections database more functional and easier to use. This has included more thorough training on 'Modes', our management system.
3. The *Wunderkammer* project has seen 2,550 objects been documented, repacked and stored. This comprises 1460 Natural Science objects, 562 art works, and 527 objects from the social history and world culture collections. This information is being used to update the collections management system and led to 333 new records being created.
4. The Integrated Pest Management programme has continued. During lockdown the displays have continued to be cleaned and a new rota for the stores has been started. This will reduce the potential for infestations by removing dust and debris such as dead flies and spiders.
5. There have been further improvements made to the museum's environmental control measures. A new Dehumidifier and Relative Humidity controlled heater was installed in the Bungalow in May. Comparable time periods from last year show this has made a significant improvement environment making it a much better storage area for collections. The humidity range has gone from 32% to 0.3%. Earlier in the year the data monitors were moved to help improve the quality of the data they were producing. The data we now have provides a snapshot of other areas where improvements needed. Actions are being planned in the Upper Durbar Hall and Bonery and will be implemented over the next 18 months.
6. Upgrades to the council's IT systems and the rollout of new laptops have limited the lifespan of the current monitoring soft wear we use. To update the programme is estimated to cost £2000.

Collections Access

7. Since September, the curators have received 26 enquires related to the collections. Local history remains the most common collection asked about.
8. The local studies room has been re-opened on Wednesdays, 10.30am-12.30pm and 2-4pm. To fit with Covid-secure guidelines people using the room are required to book a two-hour session. The sessions are bookable through the museum website (<http://www.hmag.org.uk/collections/research/>) or by calling 01424 451052 and remain free.

9. Sarah French, PhD Brassey Researcher, travelled to the US late February for her fellowship at the Huntington Library to research the Brassey Collections. Due to Covid-19 the 3-month fellowship was suspended after 3 weeks. It is hoped the research trip may resume in mid-2021. She is currently working on University related academic and admin tasks and hopes to resume archival research and writing in September. The PhD is expected to be completed in Spring 2022.

Acquisitions

10. There have been no acquisitions since the last report.

Loans

11. No loan requests have been received in this period.
12. No loans have been returned in this period.

Rationalisation

13. No requests this period.

Collections Policies

14. Over the past year we've been working with researchers from the Universities of East Anglia and Kent on their Arts & Humanities Research Council-funded project, 'Beyond the Spectacle' to develop an Indigenous Engagement Policy. We have worked with the researchers and indigenous people to agree a text that acceptable to all parties. The policy sets out the principles the museum will follow when dealing with Indigenous people. It includes practical steps we should take as well as the considerations we should keep in mind when working with Indigenous people. This policy will allow us to work with source communities and understand the collections better.

Options

15. To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.

Public Exemption

15. This report contains no exempt information.

Timetable of Next Steps

16. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Discussion by Museum Committee	Museum Committee	September 2020	Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Approval by Cabinet	Cabinet	October 2020	Museum and Cultural Development Manager
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Wards Affected

All Wards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 44.4

Have you used relevant project tools? Y

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No
Legal	No

Additional Information

HMAG Indigenous Engagement Policy

Officer to Contact

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