



Royal College  
of Surgeons  
of England

ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE

# Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums Collections Information Policy

**Collections:** The Museums of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, including the Hunterian Collection (RCSHC); the College Museum Collection (RCSHM); the Historical Instrument Collection (RCSIC); the Special (RCSSC); the Odontological Collection (RCSOM) the Anatomy Collection (RCSAC); the Pathology Collection (RCSPC); the Microscope Slide Collection (RCSMS) and associated reserve collections.

**Governing bodies:** The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England/  
The Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection

**Date approved by Trustees of the Hunterian Collection:** 9 October 2024

**Date approved by Library, Museums and Archive Committee:** 19 September 2024

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of Purpose

The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England) holds collections of outstanding medical, scientific, historical and cultural significance. Some Designated and Accredited by Arts Council England. The collections are held in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. Its aim is to care for and use these collections to:

- 1.1.1 Enhance RCS England's reputation by raising awareness of surgeons and their work in society.
  - 1.1.2 Aid the professional work of RCS England by providing training resources.
  - 1.1.3 Facilitate and generate excellent medical, scientific, historical and other research.
  - 1.1.4 Support public engagement with, and understanding of, surgery, its history and practice and related arts and sciences.
- 1.2. This policy relates to RCS England Museums (the Museums) collections as outlined in *RCS England Museums Collections Development Policy*.
- 1.3. This policy does not cover material held in RCS England Library and Archive collections.
- 1.4. This policy complements and expands upon *RCS England Museums Collections Development Policy*, *RCS England Museums Access Policy*, *RCS England Museums Collections Care and Conservation Policy*, *RCS England Museums Research Policy*, *RCS Museums Loan Policy*, *RCS England Museums Human Remains Policy*, *RCS England Museums Repatriation Policy*. It will be realised by the activities detailed in *RCS England Museums Collections Documentation Plan*.
- 1.5. RCS England Museums recognise the importance of maintaining high quality, accurate, accessible and secure collections information (also known as documentation) to support the Museums' strategic aims, as set out in *RCS England Museums Forward Plan*.
- 1.6 Collections information is recorded in the collections management system (CMS), hard copy paper files and digital files.
- 1.7 The Museums are committed to following Arts Council England's Accreditation Scheme Standard 2018<sup>1</sup>, the UK industry standard which ensures that museum and galleries manage their collections properly, engage with visitors and are governed appropriately.
- 1.8 As part of this, the Museums are committed to meeting, or having a plan to achieve, the requirements for the nine primary procedures, as outlined in the UK collections management standard Spectrum 5.1. (See Sections 3, 4, 5, 6).
- 1.9 The Museums are committed to managing their collections within recognised ethical and legal codes for the museums and heritage sector (see Appendix A for details).

## 2. Aims and objectives

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<sup>1</sup> [UK Museum Accreditation Scheme | Arts Council England](#)

- 2.1. The aim of this policy is to ensure that the Museums' collections information activities provide useful and useable information, are linked to the Museums' statement of purpose, and meet ethical commitments and legal standards.
- 2.2. Through implementation of this policy, the Museums' collections information objectives are to:
- a) Improve accountability for the collections, ensuring that sufficient information about objects in the Museums' care is recorded, so that each item for which the Museums are legally responsible (including loans) can be identified and located.
  - b) Maintain at least the minimum professional standards in procedures and processes outlined in Spectrum 5.1's nine Primary Procedures.
  - c) Improve accessibility to collections information for users.
  - d) Strengthen the security of collections information, ensuring measures are in place for the physical security, long-term preservation and safe storage of records in all formats, including backup and secure storage.

### **3. Standards**

- 3.1. The Museums are committed to meeting, at least, the minimum requirements for the nine primary procedures, as outlined in the UK collections management standard Spectrum 5.1<sup>2</sup>. These primary procedures are:
- Object entry
  - Acquisition and accessioning
  - Location and movement control
  - Inventory
  - Cataloguing
  - Object Exit
  - Loans in (borrowing objects)
  - Loans out (lending objects)
  - Documentation planning
- 3.2. The Museums aim to ensure that every object or group of objects in the RCS England Museums collections has:
- a) Documentary evidence of legal title.
  - b) A unique object number, with which they are marked and/or securely labelled.
  - c) An accurate, up-to-date, searchable catalogue record held on a secure CMS.
  - d) An accurate record in the accessions register (for accessioned collections).
  - e) An accurate and up-to-date record of location and movement.
  - f) An accurate and up-to-date record of loans out.
  - g) An accurate and up-to-date record of disposal.
  - h) Effective links with other associated documentation.
- 3.3. The Museums aim to ensure that every object or group of objects on loan has:
- a) A signed loan agreement for a fixed period.
  - b) A unique number, which has a different format to internal accession and object numbers.
  - c) An accurate, up-to-date, searchable catalogue record held on a secure CMS.
  - d) An accurate and up-to-date record of location and movement.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/primary-procedures/>

- 3.4 The Museums will maintain a Documentation Plan with the aim of prioritising improvements to its collections information. This will be reviewed annually and incorporated into the Museums' Forward Plan.
- 3.5 The Museums will maintain a Documentation Procedural Manual which is available to all museum staff, who are aware of it from their induction process and ongoing training as required for their role. The Documentation Procedural Manual will be reviewed at least every three years. Actions relating to the review and updating of the manual and staff training will be incorporated into the Museums' Forward Plan. All staff responsible for recording collections information will receive training on documentation procedures and using the CMS prior to the start of documentation work and after changes are made to documentation policies and procedures.

## **4. Procedures**

### **4.1 Object Entry**

- 4.1.1 The Museums' will accept objects into its care for acquisition and loan. In exceptional circumstances it will accept objects for assessment prior to acquisition into the collection.
- 4.1.2 Objects can only be accepted by the Director of Museums and Special Collections, in consultation with the Head of Collections and Curators.
- 4.1.3 An Entry Form will be completed for every object at the time of deposit. Copies will be retained by the Museums and the owner. The Museums' terms and conditions for deposited objects are stated on the back of entry forms.
- 4.1.4 Objects will be tagged with labels marked with their entry number.
- 4.1.5 An entry record will be created on the Entry/Transport data source on the CMS for each object entry. Entry records will be linked to object records, where locations will be kept up to date. (See Section 4.2.7 for further details on object records).

### **4.2 Acquisition and accessioning**

- 4.2.1 The Museums' policy on acquiring objects is detailed in *RCS England Museums Collections Development Policy*.
- 4.2.2 The decision to acquire any object, whether by donation, bequest or purchase, is made by the Director in accordance with the Collections Development Policy and in consultation with the Head of Collections and Curators. An Acquisition Proposal Form will be completed for any objects being considered for acquisition and proposals will be considered at curatorial meetings. In some cases, potential acquisitions will also need to be considered by the Library Museums and Archive Committee (LMAC).
- 4.2.3 The Museums will not acquire objects if there is any doubt about the seller's or donor's rights of ownership, or if there are any other legal or ethical concerns.

- 4.2.4 The Museums do not generally accept gifts where conditions or terms have been specified by the donor.
- 4.2.5 When an object is acquired for the Museums, a Transfer of Title Form (or the transfer of title section of the entry form) will be completed. Examples of a completed Entry Form and Transfer of Title Form can be found in the Documentation Procedural Manual.
- 4.2.6 Documentation relating to the acquisition will be filed in the relevant paper and digital entry files.
- 4.2.7 Only objects entering the Museums' long-term collections will be accessioned. Details of each object will be entered in the Accessions Register and the unique accession numbers will be recorded on the relevant object record on the CMS.
- 4.2.8 All objects acquired for the Museums' collections (including the un-accessioned display and handling collections), will be assigned unique object numbers. These object numbers have distinct prefixes according to their collection – see the Documentation Procedural Manual for details.
- 4.2.9 Object records meeting the minimum Spectrum 5.1 Inventory standard will be created on the CMS for each object or groups of objects. Object records will be linked to the relevant entry record.
- 4.2.10 Each object will be marked and /or labelled with its object number in a secure way, so that it can be easily linked to its object record on the CMS and to other associated documentation. Guidance for labelling and marking can be found in the Documentation Procedural Manual.
- 4.2.11 The backlog in object marking will be addressed according to the priority given in the Documentation Plan and Forward Plan.

### **4.3 Location and movement control**

- 4.3.1 All staff that work with collections are responsible for location and movement control.
- 4.3.2 Only Museums staff that work with collections can view and edit location records on the CMS.
- 4.3.3 No items should be moved without the approval of an authorised member of staff (usually the Director, Head of Collections, Senior Curators or Conservators) working under the guidance of the Conservation Team.
- 4.3.4 All objects are tracked using their object numbers. Object locations, the name of the mover, and date and time of the movement, are recorded on the CMS.
- 4.3.5 New locations must be updated as soon as possible, ideally immediately after the move (but see 4.3.8 for large scale moves policy).

- 4.3.6 Object locations are checked as part of collection audits. A schedule for collections audits is set out in the Documentation Plan and Forward Plan. The procedure for audits is described in the Documentation Procedural Manual.
- 4.3.7 If an object is being moved for a very short time and returned to the same location then a temporary movement tags may be used (see Documental Procedural Manual for details).
- 4.3.8 When large numbers of objects are moved, for example during major store moves, new locations may be temporarily recorded on securely stored paper 'location tracking sheets'. These sheets are scanned and saved in the relevant project tracking folder prior to being updated on the CMS and backed up securely.
- 4.3.9 Records of previous locations and moves are retained on the CMS. These logs can be requested by regulation bodies including the Human Tissue Authority (HTA).
- 4.3.10 Trained Museums staff and specialist contractors can move collections, following the procedures set out in the Documentation Procedural Manual, the relevant risk assessment and method statements (RAMS) and standard operating procedures (SOPS)<sup>3</sup> and using the appropriate equipment.
- 4.3.11 Collections can only be moved in the Hunterian Museum when it is closed to the public.
- 4.3.12 Movement through other parts of the building should be planned in advance to avoid busy areas and times.
- 4.3.13 Special considerations for human tissue are in place, see section 5.3.
- 4.3.14 A courier may occasionally be required to accompany objects in transit (see *RCS England Loans Policy*).

#### **4.4 Inventory**

- 4.4.1 RCS England Museums maintain inventory information for all of the objects in its care by meeting the minimum standard set out in the following Spectrum 5.1 Primary Procedures: object entry, acquisition and accessioning, location and movement control, cataloguing, object exit, loans in, loans out and documentation planning.
- 4.4.2 Core inventory information is held on the CMS, or on entry forms for newly-arrived objects. All objects entering the Museum are labelled with their entry numbers. All acquisitions are labelled and/or marked with their unique object numbers (see Documentation Procedural Manual for further information).
- 4.4.3 Location information is recorded and kept up-to-date on the CMS (see section 4.3 Location and movement control).

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<sup>3</sup> RCS England Museums SOPs and RAMS are available to museum staff on Microsoft Teams. For procedures on moving collections see SOP 30 and SOP 34.

- 4.4.4 Inventory information is regularly audited (see the Documentation Plan for the schedule and the Documentation Procedural Manual for the procedure). If an audit reveals that inventory information does not meet minimum requirements, an action designed to address the issue will be added to the Documentation Plan with agreed timeframes and resources, approved by governing bodies and senior managers (see section 4.10 Documentation planning).

## **4.5 Cataloguing**

- 4.5.1 Cataloguing refers to the ongoing process of recording and managing information about collections in RCS England Museums. Catalogue information is held on the CMS. Once core inventory information has been recorded, the Museums follow specific cataloguing procedures tailored to different collections, as outlined in the Documentation Procedural Manual.
- 4.5.2 The Museums follow Spectrum 5.1 standards and use set terminologies. These include Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), Integrated Taxonomic Information System, the Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and Social History and Industrial Classification (SHIC), as well as internally developed thesauri. Names, dates, places and other keywords are saved following set formats to controlled authority data sources.
- 4.5.3 The Museums have a Documentation Plan which highlights cataloguing gaps and sets out how they will be addressed and according to which priorities. This includes work to identify and address contemporary and historical biases, including 'decolonisation' work.
- 4.5.4 The catalogue includes historic descriptions, some of which contain language that is outdated, offensive, and/or inaccurate. The Museums are actively working to address this. Historical content within catalogue records will not be erased, but rather moved to appropriate contexts within the CMS ('historical description' fields, for example).
- 4.5.5 Catalogue information is available to users via the online catalogue, named 'Surgicat'<sup>4</sup>.
- 4.5.6 Confidential information, such as personal data, object locations and valuations, and information about human remains covered by the Human Tissue Act 2004, is only visible to collections staff via the CMS. User access rights are tailored on an individual basis and staff only have access to the parts of the system and the information required for their role.
- 4.5.7 Catalogue records on the CMS reference collections information held in other sources, such as paper catalogues, publications and object files, as well as information arising from other procedures (see Document Procedural Manual).

## **4.6 Object exit**

- 4.6.1 The exit of objects from the Museums must be approved by the Director of Museums and Special Collections.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk/home>



- 4.6.2 Every object from the Museums' collections that leave the Museums, for example for loan, conservation or disposal, will be listed on an object exit form. This exit form will state the reason for exit and will be signed and dated by the Museums and the recipient. A signed original copy will be saved in the object exit folder, and a second copy will be given or sent to the recipient.
- 4.6.3 Conservation or curatorial staff will undertake conservation reports, risk assessments and photography, prior to object exit (see *RCS England Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and the Documentation Procedural Manual).
- 4.6.4 An object exit record will be created in the 'Outgoing loan' data source on the CMS and linked to the relevant object record(s).
- 4.6.5 Object entry forms will be used to record when an object, which has never become part of the collections, is returned to its owner. The object's owner will sign the form to acknowledge the return. The signed form will be retained in the entry folder.
- 4.6.6 Locations will be updated on the CMS as soon as possible, ideally immediately after the exit.

#### **4.7 Loans in**

- 4.7.1 Incoming loans must be authorised by the Director of Museums and Special Collections.
- 4.7.2 A loan agreement will be completed for all loans in before they begin, outlining the reasons and details of the loan, the fixed period of the loan, conditions of care standards to meet and other terms, and signed and dated by the lender and borrower. A signed copy will be saved in the corresponding entry folder, and a second copy will be given or sent to the lender.
- 4.7.3 Incoming loan agreements will not exceed five years, at which point return or renewal, gift or sale will be considered.
- 4.7.4 The Museums will provide appropriate insurance or indemnity cover for borrowed objects while they are their responsibility (including in transit).
- 4.7.5 Entry forms will be completed and entry records will be created on the CMS for all incoming loans. Object records will be created on the CMS for all loaned in objects. These will meet the inventory standard, including up-to-date location information.
- 4.7.6 Loans in will be assessed upon arrival by conservation or curatorial staff and compared with the lender's condition report.
- 4.7.7 Signed entry forms, loan agreements, condition reports and other important documents and correspondence relating to the loan will be filed in the corresponding

entry folders. If UKRG Facilities Reports, Case and Security Supplements<sup>5</sup> are required for the loan they will also be filed in the entry folder.

- 4.7.8 See *RCS England Museums Loans Policy*, *RCS England Museums Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and the Documentation Procedural Manual for further details on Loans policy and procedures.

## **4.8 Loans out**

- 4.8.1 Outgoing loans must be authorised by the Director of Museums and Special Collections.
- 4.8.2 A loan agreement will be completed for all loans out before they begin, outlining the reasons and details of the loan, the fixed period of the loan, conditions of care standards to meet and other terms, and signed and dated by the lender and borrower. A signed copy will be saved in the corresponding exit folder, and a second copy will be given or sent to the borrower.
- 4.8.3 Outgoing loan agreements will not exceed five years, at which point return or renewal, gift or sale will be considered.
- 4.8.4 Borrowers must provide appropriate insurance or indemnity cover for borrowed objects while they are their responsibility (including in transit).
- 4.8.5 Exit forms will be completed and exit records will be created on the CMS for all loans out. See *RCS England Museums Loans Policy* and the Documentation Procedural Manual for further details.
- 4.8.6 Conservation or curatorial staff will undertake conservation reports, risk assessments and photography of material prior to loans out.
- 4.8.7 Signed exit forms, loan agreements, condition reports and other important documents and correspondence relating to the loan will be filed in the corresponding exit folders. If UKRG Facilities Reports, Case and Security Supplements<sup>6</sup> are required for the loan they will also be filed in the Exit folder.
- 4.8.8 See *RCS England Museums Loans Policy*, *RCS England Museums Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and the Documentation Procedural Manual for further details on Loans policy and procedures.

## **4.9 Use of collections and accessibility**

- 4.9.1 The Museums are committed to enabling the widest possible physical and intellectual access to the collections through: gallery interpretation, temporary exhibitions, events, learning programmes, digital engagement, research and publications. See *RCS England Museums Access Policy* for more details.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/ukrg-documents/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/ukrg-documents/>

4.9.2 RCS England Museums are committed to encouraging and fostering excellent research into the collections (see *RCS England Museums Research Policy*).

4.9.3 The Museums will record information about the use of collections and information generated from the use of collections on the CMS. Procedures for this are detailed in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

#### **4.10 Documentation Planning**

4.10.1 Gaps and backlogs in primary and other procedures are monitored by the Curators and Head of Collections. Audits will be carried out cyclically, as outlined in the Documentation Plan, to check the overall accuracy and standard of collections information and identify areas for improvement. Details of the auditing procedure can be found in *the Documentation Procedural Manual*.

4.10.2 The Museums will develop a Documentation Plan, to be reviewed annually, to support improvements in collections information, with the Inventory primary procedure being the highest priority.

### **5. Human remains**

5.1 All human tissue must be handled and stored in a respectful and ethical manner.

5.2 Transit of human tissue less than 100 years old must meet the standards set out in the Human Tissue Authority's Codes of Practice<sup>7</sup>.

5.3 All human tissue must be covered before being moved out of a museum store, gallery or work area.

5.4 Human tissue less than 100 years old must be stored only in areas covered by the appropriate HTA licence.

5.5 Information about human remains covered by the Human Tissue Act 2004, is only visible to collections staff via the CMS. Information about human remains covered by the Human Tissue Act 2004 is hidden on the public online catalogue, *Surgicat*<sup>8</sup>.

5.6 Images of HTA licenced human tissue are managed in accordance with RCS England procedures which allow these to be used to support collections management and medical education. All HTA images must be stored on a secure server only accessible by museums staff. Requests for use of images to support medical education must be approved by the HTA Person Designated or HTA Designated Individual.

5.7 Information on RCS England Museums approach to the display of human remains can be found in the Human Remains Policy.

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<sup>7</sup> (<https://content.hta.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Code%20C%20standards.pdf>)

Also see RCS England Museums Standard Operating Procedures 30 and 34 (see HTA channel on Microsoft Teams).

<sup>8</sup> <http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk/home>

- 5.8 The Museums will follow guidance published by DCMS (2005) on the use of human remains in research<sup>9</sup>.
- 5.9 External users will only be granted permission to undertake research on human remains once ethical clearance from their own institution is demonstrated.
- 5.10 Research on human remains less than 100 years old must be undertaken in accordance with the Human Tissue Act (2004) and Human Tissue Authority guidance.

## **6. Access, retention and security**

- 6.1. Collections information will be publicly accessible through the Museums' online catalogue, where possible. Information will be withheld where public access would breach:
- the Human Tissue Act 2004,
  - licensing, copyright and other intellectual property rights,
  - the security and privacy of individuals,
  - the security of collections (including object location and valuation information).
- 6.2 Personal data collected as part of collections documentation will be stored and processed in accordance with the provisions of the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 6.3 Paper records will be organised in labelled archival boxes and folders and stored in secure locations. Paper documentation will be cross-referenced on the CMS.
- 6.4 Paper accession registers will be scanned to produce digital back-up copies. A digital back-up copy of accessions data will also be exported from the CMS. These back-ups will be updated annually and stored in a secure location away from other collections documentation.
- 6.5 Documentation in a digital format will be securely held and fully backed-up by RCS England's IT department on a daily basis. Any deleted files will be available for recovery for at least two weeks.
- 6.6 Documentation information will be archived and retained in accordance with the Museums' Retention Schedule.
- 6.7 The Museums will ensure that the CMS receives regular updates and upgrades so that the technology does not become obsolete or unsupported. The Museums will review collections management procedures and systems at least every three years, to ensure they are fit for purpose and collections information is appropriately safeguarded. (See Section 4.10 Documentation planning).
- 6.8 RCS England Museums is upgrading its CMS from Adlib to Axiell Collections. Adlib is stored on an RCS England server and is backed up on a daily basis by the IT

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<sup>9</sup> DCMS *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*, 2004  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/606215c0e90e072d91e8eb59/GuidanceHumanRemains11Oct\\_V2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/606215c0e90e072d91e8eb59/GuidanceHumanRemains11Oct_V2.pdf). See section 2.9.

Department. Axiell Collections will be hosted in an offsite secure data centre by the software provider, Axiell. They will manage the back-up of data, plan disaster recovery and guarantee data security by upholding the standards required by various certification levels.

## **7. Offsite storage**

- 7.1 RCS England Museums store some collections in commercial, off-site storage. For these objects, locations are recorded at storage site level. These commercial partners are responsible for audit, and location and movement control within an individual storage site, but will inform the client well in advance of any proposal to change an object's storage site location. If a change of storage site is approved and undertaken, this location will then be updated by Museum staff on the CMS.
- 7.2 RCS England Museums also lease some object storage space within the stores of another museum. In these storage locations, all elements of the Museum's collections information activities are undertaken by RCS England Museums staff in the same way as in on-site stores.

## **Appendix A – Legislation, ethical codes of practice and sectorial standards applying to collections management policies**

### **Legislation applying to collections management policies**

The Human Tissue Act, 2004 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/30/contents>

Codes of Practice, Human Tissue Authority <https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/codes-practice-standards-and-legislation/codes-practice>

Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, UNESCO, 1970 <https://unesco.org.uk/conventions/unesco-convention-on-the-means-of-prohibiting-the-illicit-import-export-and-transfer-of-ownership-of-cultural-property-1970/>

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>

Copyright Act 1911 and 1956 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/4-5/74/enacted>

Copyright and Related Rights Regulations, 2003  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/2498/contents>

Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents>

Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/27>

Equality Act, 2010, (Amendment) Regulations 2023  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/1425/contents/made>

Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents>

COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2677/regulation/7>

The Treasure Act, 1996, The Treasure (Designation) (Amendment) Order 2023  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/404/made>

### **Ethical codes of practice applying to collections management policies**

Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association, 2016

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/ethics/code-of-ethics/>

Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM, 2017 <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/>

DCMS Code of Practice Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, October 2005  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-the-care-of-human-remains-in-museums>

Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on collecting and borrowing Cultural Material, DCMS, 2005 [https://www.obs-traffic.museum/sites/default/files/ressources/files/DCMS\\_DD\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.obs-traffic.museum/sites/default/files/ressources/files/DCMS_DD_Guidelines.pdf)

UK Export Licensing for Cultural Goods – Procedures and guidance for exporters of works of art and other culture goods, DCMS, 2021 [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Guidance\\_for\\_exporters\\_Issue\\_2\\_2021\\_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Guidance_for_exporters_Issue_2_2021_0.pdf)

Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on spoliation of works of art during the Holocaust and World War II period, 1998  
[https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/contributing-sector/cultural-property/spoliation/spoliation\\_statement/#:~:text=2-.Statement%20of%20principles,Holocaust%20and%20World%20War%20II.](https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/contributing-sector/cultural-property/spoliation/spoliation_statement/#:~:text=2-.Statement%20of%20principles,Holocaust%20and%20World%20War%20II.)

## **Sectorial standards applying to collections management policies**

Spectrum 5.1 - UK Museum Collections Management Standard

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/>

Accreditation Standard, Arts Council England, 2018

[https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Accreditation\\_Standard\\_Nov2018\\_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Accreditation_Standard_Nov2018_0.pdf)

Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums Archives and Libraries, Collections Trust

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Benchmarks-in-Collections-Care-2.1-1.pdf>

Standard Facilities Report (including Display Case supplement and Security Supplement), UK Registrars' Group <https://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/resources/ukrg-docs/>

## **Appendix B - Glossary of terms**

**Accession** - The formal commitment by a museum's governing body to care for objects over the long term.

**Accession register** - A bound paper record of all objects which are, or have been, part of a museum's long-term collection.

**Accreditation** - The scheme administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which assigns accredited status to museums and galleries that meet agreed Accreditation Standards in how they're run, how they manage their collections and how they engage with their users.

**Acquisition** - Taking legal ownership of objects, especially (but not always) to add to a museum's long-term collections through the process of accessioning.

**Audit** - To systematically check the accuracy and completeness of the information a museum has about the collections in its care.

**Backlog** - Outstanding documentation activities that work towards achieving the minimum standard for Spectrum 5.1 Inventory procedure.

**Cataloguing** - The ongoing process of recording and managing information about collections, often from multiple perspectives, to meet the needs of a range of users. This goes beyond the minimum Inventory level.

**Collections development** – Acquisition to and disposal from a museum's collection, in accordance with the museum's policies and procedures.

**Collections information** - All the information that a museum collects, creates, holds, and maintains about the objects in its collection.

**Collections management** - The strategies, policies, processes and procedures related to collections development, information, access and care.

**Collections management system (CMS)** - A searchable database linking objects to related information through a unique number.

**Data source** - A database storing information, as records, within a Collections Management System (CMS). Each data source stores a specific type of information: the 'Object catalogue' contains inventory and catalogue information about objects in the collection; 'Locations and containers' holds details about the places where collection items can be found; 'Persons and institutions' holds details about people and organisations involved with the collection. Authority data sources control vocabulary to ensure consistent use of names and terms throughout the records by specifying that a name or term is preferred.

**Display collection** – Un-accessioned, contextual objects acquired for display, such as facsimile books and objects.

**Deaccessioning and disposal** - The formal decision by a governing body to take objects out of its accessioned collection ('deaccessioning') and managing the disposal of those objects through an agreed method. Reasons to dispose of objects that belong to a museum might include: objects damaged beyond further use; repatriation of human remains or sacred objects; or transferring duplicate objects to another museum. Sometimes, objects are 'transferred' within a museum, e.g. from the collection of accessioned objects to a handling collection of non-accessioned ones.

**Documentation** - Gathering and recording information about objects, their histories and associations and the processes they undergo within the organisation. The purpose of documentation is to account for, manage and use objects to achieve the stated aims and objectives of the holding organisation.

**Documentation plan** – A written document setting out specific priorities for improving collections information and how they will be achieved within a realistic timeframe given the available resources.

**Documentation procedural manual** - A written document containing an evolving series of clear instructions to standardise the capture, recording, safekeeping and use of information about museum collections. It describes the documentation system used in a particular museum and communicates that system to all staff and volunteers.

**Entry form** – A triplicate, pre-numbered, pre-printed carbonless form with standard terms and conditions for deposit printed on the reverse. The form is used to record object description and entry information and act as a receipt for the owner.

**Entry number** - A unique number assigned to the entry of an object or group of objects and used to track objects prior to their return or acquisition. It should serve as the reference to written documentation of objects entering the organisation for the first time. The number should be the one assigned to an entry form.

**Entry record** – A record within the Entry (also known as the Transport) data source on the CMS, recording entry information for an object or group of objects.

**Exit form** - A triplicate, pre-numbered, pre-printed carbonless form used to record when objects leave the buildings a museum is responsible for and pass out of its direct care.

**Exit number** - A unique identifying number for an exit. It should serve as the reference to written documentation of an exit. The number should be the one assigned to an exit form.

**Exit record** - A record within the 'Outgoing loans' data source on the CMS, recording the exit information for an object or group of objects.

**Handling collection** – Un-accessioned objects acquired for use in teaching, demonstration and handling.

**Human Tissue Act 2004** - An Act to make provision with respect to activities involving human tissue; to make provision about the transfer of human remains from certain museum collections; and for connected purposes.

**Human Tissue Authority** - The regulator of human tissue and organs, a non-departmental public body of the Department of Health and Social Care.

**Inventory** - Recording the basic information required for a museum to be accountable for objects in its care. This includes a unique object number, object name, brief description (or image), current location, acquisition information (or the current owner if it belongs to someone else), and a note of who recorded this information and when.

**Labelling** - Affixing numbered labels to objects. Objects must be labelled or marked with their entry or object numbers so that they can be linked to the information a museum holds about them. Items which do not belong the museum, such as loans or potential donations, should be labelled but not marked.



**Loan agreement** - A written agreement signed by the lender and the borrower before any loan begins, with clear reference to the care standards they agree to meet and other terms and conditions.

**Location and movement control** - Updating the recorded location each time an object in a museum collection is moved.

**Marking** - Affixing an object number to an object owned by the museum in such a way as to prevent accidental removal of the mark but to allow reversibility. The preference should normally be to physically mark objects owned by the museum: however, in some cases this may not be possible and they should only be labelled.

**Object entry** - Logging all objects coming into a museum's care for whatever reason, including Loans and potential acquisitions.

**Object exit** - Recording when objects that a museum is responsible for leave the building and pass out of its direct care.

**Object files** – A paper filing system containing documents related to objects in a museum's collections. These files compliment and are referenced on the CMS.

**Object number** – Unique identifying number assigned to all objects owned by the museum. Objects in the accessioned, long-term collections have different prefixes from those in the un-accessioned handling and display collections.

**Object record** – A record on the object catalogue that captures details about an individual item or a group of objects. An object record will include the basic Inventory information (unique object number, object name, brief description or image, the current location, acquisition information or the current owner if it belongs to someone else, and a note of who recorded this information and when), plus further information as outlined a museum's cataloguing policy.

**Primary procedures** – The nine, main activities that most museums do when managing their collections. UK museums wanting to meet the requirements of the Accreditation scheme will have to demonstrate that they meet, or have a plan to achieve, the Spectrum standard for all nine. These primary procedures are: Object entry, Acquisition and accessioning, Location and movement control, Inventory, Cataloguing, Object Exit, Loans in (borrowing objects), Loans out (lending objects), Documentation planning.

**Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS)** - RAMS identify hazards in a specific task and analyse the possible risks and severity to staff and visitors. A method statement describes, in a logical, step-by-step manner, how a specific task should be done, taking into consideration the health and safety implications of a task and outlining the control measures that must be followed to reduce risk.

**Retention schedule** - A retention schedule sets out the classes of records a museum retains and the length of time these are retained before a final disposition action is taken (i.e. destruction or transfer to the Archives).

**Standard operating procedure** - A set of step-by-step instructions compiled by an organisation to help staff carry out routine activities.

**Transfer of title** - A legal term to describe the formal process of a change of ownership of an object from one person or organisation to another.

**UKRG Facilities report** – Template form devised by the United Kingdom Registrars Group in consultation with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. This lists general requirements to be considered during the loan of an object.

**Valuation** - Documenting the financial value of objects, whether owned by a museum or borrowed.