

DOCUMENTATION POLICY

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction

This policy is part of the Fitzwilliam Museum Collections Management Framework. Its purpose is to support the implementation of a full and detailed documentation plan, in line with the Museum Mission and in proportion to resources available.

1.2 Role

The role of documentation in the Museum is to ensure efficient recording of our collections information to meet national and internationally agreed standards. This will facilitate a variety of activities such as security, accountability, study, research, use and access.

1.3 Recognition of importance

Documentation of the collection and archives is a core activity of the Fitzwilliam Museum. This Documentation Policy supports the Fitzwilliam Museum's Strategic Priorities as defined in the Museum Mission (2019) and Museum Strategic Framework (from Business Plan 2016-2021).

1.4 Prioritisation

The Museum recognises that high priority, staff resourcing and realistic time provision should be apportioned within curatorial departments to enable the delivery of the Documentation Plan.

1.5 Responsibility

Documentation is the responsibility of each of the five curatorial departments, with loans administered by the Museum Registrar.

1.6 Coordination

The Museum's documentation activities (which includes the development and supervision of procedural, data management and terminology standards) are coordinated and championed by the Collections Information and Documentation Coordinator, based in the Department of Digital and IT.

1.7 Format scope

The Museum's documentation records are held in an array of formats, both paper and digital. The Museum acknowledges that some of its holdings and documentation are 'born digital'. The Museum maintains a central digital collections database and management system (currently Adlib). The majority of the Museum's paper records (for example index cards) are held within individual curatorial departments.

2. Principles

2.1 Accountability

The Museum will record sufficient information about the items in its care to establish the identity, location and legal ownership of the items, and to support efficient management of the Museum's collections.

2.1.1 Digital integration

The Museum will record new collections information in a digital format if possible and appropriate, using the central digital collections database and management system to input or reference this information; if the primary format of information is analogue or paper, it will be cross-referenced with the digital system by using integrated numbering.

2.1.2 Keeping records up to date

The Museum will keep collections information up to date, implementing a long term policy to eliminate any retrospective accessioning backlog and accessioning new acquisitions as soon as possible. The Museum will aim to create a basic digital inventory or 'tombstone' record (with sufficient key information for identification) for all objects and catalogue records; the Museum will strive to create a digital 'total record of truth' for an object when possible which will incorporate text, images (both 2D and 3D) and spatial data where appropriate.

2.2 Adherence to standards and guidelines

The Museum has a commitment to maintaining minimum professional and legislative standards in documenting its collections.

2.2.1 Accreditation and National standards

The Museum will meet, or exceed the minimum required standards of Spectrum 5.0 Primary Procedures as laid out within the Museum's Documentation Procedures Manual. The Museum's documentation and procedural activities will be fully appraised of all current standards required to meet Arts Council Museum Accreditation.

2.2.2 Legislation and ethical codes

The Museum's documentation activities will be fully appraised of all current legislation (including where appropriate copyright and intellectual property rights, GDPR and Freedom of Information). These activities will be carried out in accordance with the Museum Association Code of Ethics and the University of Cambridge's Ethics policies.

2.3 Accessibility

Within a framework of standards and best practice guidelines, particularly requirements to

protect sensitive personal and financial information, the Museum's documentation systems will be developed to maintain and extend access to collections information. This will involve access for both internal and external users, including the general public, staff and students of the University of Cambridge and visiting researchers.

2.3.1 Procedures

The principles behind our collections documentation procedures and processes will be responsive to the practical needs of users whilst being fully informed by the Spectrum standards. The Museum recognises that procedural need may require an iterative and evolving response, driven by changing user requirements.

2.3.2 Integration and standardisation

The Museum recognises that systems employed for documentation and collections information should be rationalised and unified. Where this is impractical, the Museum will endeavour to use Applications Programming Interfaces (APIs) to integrate and create interoperable systems for effective management of data. System developments should uphold the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people.

2.3.3 Open Data

The Museum encourages wide access to and use of collections data produced by the service, for all audiences. In principle, Open Data licences under the Creative Commons Scheme will be applied on all holding where rights are owned by the Museum. This policy will enable the academic, public and creative industries to be able to reuse and repurpose materials, whilst adhering to the University of Cambridge's mission.

2.4 Security of information

All paper-based and digital records created by the Museum will be processed and stored in such a way that they are protected from security risks.

2.4.1 Secure storage

Information held in digital format will be stored on suitable IT infrastructure with appropriate access levels. Information held in analogue format by individual curatorial departments or registrar will be managed by those departments to ensure secure access. If the Museum processes and stores any documentation that can be classed as personal information, it will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and pay full and due regard to the principles of GDPR.

2.4.1 Preservation and back up

Both paper and digital records will be stored in such a way as to avoid loss and ensure long-term preservation. Digital copies of any documentation will be securely backed up nightly and

follow the Stanford University 'Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe' principles (LOCKSS). Digital data will be exported regularly in common interoperable and standard formats to mitigate against potential technical inaccessibility in the future.

2.4.2 Systems sustainability

Digital systems to support documentation will be developed in such a way as to promote sustainability and ensure that they can be maintained into the future. Use of open source and de facto standard technologies will be encouraged where appropriate, and proprietary solutions avoided wherever possible.

3. Implementation

3.1 Governance

This Documentation Policy has been submitted to the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum for approval.

3.2 Stakeholder management

This Documentation Policy will be used to guide the Documentation Plan, prepared by the Collections Information and Documentation Coordinator in consultation with all stakeholders involved in any processes that fall under documentation activities.

3.3 Owner

The policy owner is the Collections Information and Documentation Coordinator.

3.4 Publication

The Documentation Policy, Plan and any related documents will be posted on the staff intranet for access by all staff and colleagues within the Museum. The Principles of this Documentation Policy will be posted on the Museum's website for public access.

3.5 Audit

Regular audits of documentation information and procedures will be carried out.

3.6 Review

We will review this Policy at least once every five years. The next review date will be no later than September 2024.

Updated February 2020 – references to other Museum documents.

4. References

Accreditation and National standards

- [Spectrum 5.0 UK Museum Collections Management Standard 2017](#)
- [Arts Council Museum Accreditation Standards 2019](#)
- [PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management](#)

Legislation and ethical codes

- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#)
- [Museum Association Code of Ethics 2015](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [University of Cambridge Statutes and Ordinances 2018](#)

Museum Documents

- Documentation Plan 2019
- Documentation Procedures Manual
- Collections Management Framework
- Museum Mission
- Business Plan 2016-2021