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LIVERPOOL

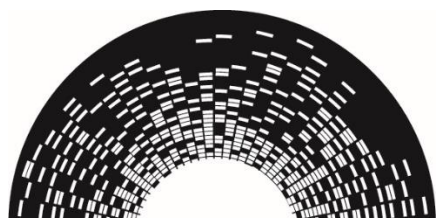
Collections Access Policy

Libraries, Museums, Galleries

Produced: November 2024

Adopted: 20 December 2024

Date of Review: 20 December 2026



ACCREDITED
MUSEUM



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ARCHIVE SERVICE

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Name of service: Victoria Gallery & Museum (Museum Accreditation No. AN249), Garstang Museum of Archaeology (Museum Accreditation No. AN315) and Special Collections & Archives

Name of governing body: The University of Liverpool

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 20 December 2024

Policy review procedure: The Collections Access Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every two years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: 20 December 2026

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Collections Access Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

Introduction

The University of Liverpool's Libraries, Museums, Galleries (LMG) hold important collections built up since the founding of the University in 1881 through gift, purchases and bequest. The collections include a great variety of artworks, artefacts, natural history, scientific specimens, library and archival collections, in physical and digital formats.

These collections are an important resource for teaching and research, both to the University and to visiting researchers from around the world. Wherever possible and appropriate, the collections are made widely accessible to members of the public by the means of display, through educational programmes and through loans to other collections and via the internet.

LMG are committed to, and believe that, all people and sectors of the community have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy the collections and services they provide. We recognise that there are many barriers to access at all levels but are committed to making all aspects of our activities as fully accessible as our resources allow, including access to buildings, collections, events, exhibitions, learning and to our staff and volunteers as well as visitors.

LMG are committed to increasing access to collections and information associated with those collections, to increase knowledge and understanding of the items we hold and the University's cultural heritage. We will ensure sustainable access to collections and that any competing demands of access and long-term care of collection items will be managed in accordance with the outcomes of a collections care risk assessment. We will provide welcoming staff and learning opportunities for different audiences, different levels of ability and our programmes will be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups. We will promote all our activities and collections using accessible means of communication.

This policy sets out measures in place to provide that access. We aim to provide an excellent service to all visitors and welcome feedback in order that we may continually improve.

LMG will adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including specifically in relation to access, but not exclusively the Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

This policy is consistent with the University's Diversity and Equality of Opportunity Policy 2023, which adopts the principle of equality of opportunity:

“Equality of opportunity is about treating everyone as an individual with consideration for their needs and abilities, so that everyone has an equal opportunity to reach their full potential.”

Scope

This policy covers provision at the Victoria Gallery & Museum (VGM), Garstang Museum (GM), Special Collections & Archives (SCA), which are all part of the LMG offer, as well as our websites, social media and other online activities and platforms.

Potential barriers to access

When we refer to access, we mean the opportunity to engage with our buildings, collections, content, and expertise. There are several key barriers to access:

- **Attitudinal:** for example, some people may have a lack of interest in, or awareness of, LMG and our collections or of the programmes and services we provide.
- **Intellectual:** for example, some people may find LMG too specialist in our approaches to subjects and how they are presented; some may have learning disabilities that affect their ability to engage with LMG; and some may not be able to read or speak English.
- **Cultural:** for example, some people may feel that LMG is not relevant to them and do not reflect their cultural or social heritage, or their interests.
- **Economic:** for example, some people may not be able to afford to visit or take part in our programmes.
- **Geographic:** for example, some people will live too far away to visit.
- **Physical/sensory:** for example, people with physical disabilities, limited mobility, or hearing or visual impairments may not be able to access us, our website, social media channels or programmes.
- **Technological:** for example, some people may not have access to the internet at home or use a smart phone.

We will follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively, BS8300 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people, BS8477:2007 Code of practice for customer service, BS EN 17820:2023 ‘Conservation of Cultural Heritage — Specifications for the management of moveable cultural heritage collections’ and PAS78 Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites.

Ways we support access

LMG seeks to:

- Uphold the statutory requirements of the Equalities Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people; by providing auxiliary aids and services which enable disabled people to use LMG; and by removing, altering or circumventing physical barriers within our buildings.
- Work with University colleagues and other organisations to review and improve signage and access to our buildings and facilities.
- Offer the widest and most appropriate forms of access possible to collections, facilities and services.
- Provide high quality programmes, resources and services.
- Enrich people’s lives through enabling participation, learning, understanding, inspiration and enjoyment.

- Actively identify and strive to overcome physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, social, attitudinal, geographical, technological and financial barriers to access, integrating equity and diversity into everything that we do.
- Manage collections access whilst maintaining long-term collection care, minimising the risk of damage and deterioration of the collections.
- Sustain a culture of customer care, providing all users with excellent service in person and remotely.
- Provide access opportunities that take account of visitor evaluation and audience data, both physical and digital, including developing programmes that encourage low/non-users to engage with the collections and services.
- Develop and expand digital and remote access opportunities. This includes exploring potential of new technologies to transform access and to further open up access to new, global and diverse audiences
- Communicate effectively with all our audiences and promote the collections and services available.
- Ensure that all our galleries, exhibitions, reading rooms and learning activities are accessible for wheelchair users.
- Ensure that if any service user cannot access a specific display or exhibit, we will provide an alternative way to access the information where possible, for example through images or written interpretation.
- Provide an accessible toilet and baby-changing facilities.
- Provide seating throughout the museums.
- Maintain opening hours throughout the year (Tuesday to Saturday 10am until 5pm at VGM; Wednesday and Thursday 10am until 4pm at GM; Tuesday to Friday 10am until 4pm at SCA) to maximise visiting opportunities for people to visit regardless of their working pattern.
- Maintain free entry to our museums to encourage visits by all regardless of income.
- Provide internal signage and information to enable all visitors to explore the museums and locate facilities easily.
- Provide a basic guide to the museum in a range of languages for visitors from overseas. We will use information from visitor surveys to review the range of languages to match our actual and potential visitor communities.

Users, collections and interpretation

In this Policy, users and audiences are defined as individuals and groups who engage with and make use of, or potentially might engage with and make use of, the collections and/or collections-related resources, services, facilities, activities, content and programmes, including on site, off site and online.

LMG seeks to:

- Work with groups and advisors to develop our activities and aids for people with sensory impairments and special needs, to continually update our Access Audit and inform our Access Policy and Plan.
- Display exhibits which reflect the range and diversity of the collections and engage with the diversity of our users and their needs. This supports our mission to enable, embody and amplify the strategic ambitions of Liverpool 2031 as a provider of comprehensive

collections and services, as research and curatorial partners, and as professional leaders.

- Provide access to collections and appropriate associated information, to meet the needs of all researchers and different cultures and communities. This includes direct physical access and provision of information in a suitable and accessible format to users who cannot visit. We seek to be sensitive to the nature of requests and to users. Information given out will be subject to legal and ethical constraints, or other substantive reasons to restrict access, for example data protection legislation.
- Access to study items in the collections will be supervised by a member of staff, to assist the researcher, ensure the security of the collections, and provide guidance in handling where necessary. Wherever possible, items will be made available in a wheelchair-accessible research area unless the size, weight or other aspects of the items make it necessary to view in store, accompanied by a member of staff.
- Promote public awareness of the full extent of the collections through temporary exhibitions in the VGM, on-line (websites, [Digital Heritage Lab](#), social media) and through other remote means, for example talks by staff.
- Guidance on how to access the collections, including digital and surrogate access, and any restrictions to access will be communicated via our websites including the collection catalogues
- Free weekly tours of the VGM will be conducted by trained volunteers and 360 versions of the physical exhibitions are available on the VGM website together with 360 building tours of the VGM and GM.
- Differentiate between commercial reproduction requests for images of the collections and non-commercial/not-for-profit requests from local communities, researchers, students and educational, academic, or charitable organisations for fees and charges and conditions. This is to foster knowledge and use of the collections through their wider study and publication and maintain a balance between legitimate income generation and access for non-commercial users.
- Incorporate multisensory exhibits and tactile objects into exhibitions and galleries where appropriate.
- Ensure that video-based exhibits have subtitles if they use the spoken word, and/or printed copies of the script for reference.
- Write text for use in our galleries, exhibitions, educational resources, publications, website and social media channels which is carefully tailored to the needs of their intended audiences.
- Provide appropriate aids and options to enhance exploration of the museums and collections by all, for example ear defenders, young explorer backpacks to assist young visitors in general and especially those on the autism spectrum.
- Ensure that the content and delivery of our learning programmes and activities are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences.
- Provide tailored session options for special schools and Special Educational Needs (SEN) units in schools and colleges.

Collections study and research facilities

Collection items not on display can be accessed via appointment. Consultation of SCA collections will take place in the SCA reading room, which is wheelchair accessible and based in the Sydney Jones Library on Abercromby Square. Consultation of GM collections will take place

in the teaching room at the GM while consultation of VGM collections will take place either at the VGM or in the heritage store, which is wheelchair accessible and situated in the centre of campus. From summer 2025, virtual consultations will be made available in the refurbished GM research room for GM collections to foster cross-institutional and international research collaboration. Collections appointments are supervised by trained, professional staff and researchers are advised on how to handle material they are consulting.

To protect original archive and manuscript material, physical or digital surrogates will be provided for consultation where available. Physical surrogates will be made available in the SCA reading room, with some material also available online, where appropriate, and considering relevant legislation and any restrictions imposed by owners or copyright holders. Access to original material for which there is a surrogate may be permitted where the user can demonstrate that this is necessary for their research and where there is no overriding reason the original should not be produced.

Access to collections information

Access to SCA collections descriptions and service information can be found via the [SCA website](#), which also provides a gateway to the online catalogues. SCA printed collections are also searchable via JISC Library Hub Discover, ISCT, ESCT and WorldCat.

All of the oils and sculptures from the fine art collection are available on the [Art UK website](#).

The [Digital Heritage Lab](#) provides access to digitised collections and online exhibitions curated from the collections as well as full text transcriptions.

LMG is committed to widening access to collections via digitised content as far as resources permit, and plan to develop this area of activity further in the next five years. This includes developing its digitisation prioritisation framework, aligned to underused and underexposed collections.

Marketing and publicity

LMG will:

- Ensure that our promotional activities present the museums as a welcoming, non-threatening, inclusive and family-friendly destination.
- Promote our services to a broad range of users through a variety of media and online for local and target audiences, within the restrictions of budget and staff resources. Essential information on accessibility and how to visit us is included on our websites.

Staffing and training

LMG will:

- Ensure that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival and are put at their ease. Our front of house team is trained to offer a guide of what to expect inside the museums, answer visitor questions and provide guidance and reassurance about navigation, how to move around the museums and where to find key exhibits and points of interest.
- Staff and volunteers are Dementia Friends trained and the Curator of Lifelong Learning is a Dementia Friends Ambassador.

- The Curator of Lifelong Learning advises on giving accessible access for those with special educational needs.
- Staff attend appropriate training on accessibility for a range of users with different access needs.

Partnerships and networking

To extend access to collections further, LMG will:

- Provide loans to other museums and archives nationally and internationally, subject to our conditions of loan.
- Maintain an education and handling collection specifically for taught school sessions and family friendly learning activities, to encourage interaction with the collections while preserving the main collections from undue risks.
- Actively develop partnerships for the exhibitions and learning programme.

Legislation, Standards and Guidelines

This policy sits within a wider framework of sector best practice, legislation and University of Liverpool governance and policies. Access to the collections must comply with:

- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Freedom of Information Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Copyright legislation
- BS EN 17820:2023 '*Conservation of Cultural Heritage — Specifications for the management of moveable cultural heritage collections*'
- National Council on Archives: Public Services Quality Group (2008) *A Standard for Access to Archives*
- Museum Accreditation and Archive Service Accreditation
- Collection Management Policy (2024)
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy (2024)
- Collections Information Policy (2024)
- Collection Development Policy (2024)
- University of Liverpool Access and participation plan 2025-26 to 2028-29
- University of Liverpool Royal Charter
- [University Library Customer Charter](#)
- LMG Strategic Plan 2024 - 2031

Review

Policy review date: November 2026