Collections Information Policy

Libraries, Museums, Galleries

Produced: November 2024

Adopted: 20 December 2024

Date of Review: 20 December 2026

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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 Information 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 Information Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

1. Introduction

This Policy guides the creation and management of information associated with the collections of Cultural Heritage Services (CHS), ensuring that it is consistent with the mission of the University's Libraries, Museums and Galleries (LMG) and with professional standards.

The policy demonstrates LMG's commitment to increasing access to the collections and information associated with those collections, to increase knowledge and understanding of the items and the University's and Liverpool City Region's cultural heritage.

The collections comprise of a great variety of artworks, artefacts, natural history, scientific specimens, library and archival collections, in physical and digital formats. Managing the information about these collections, associated Data Protection, Intellectual Property Rights and other associated rights and agreements, is critical in the use of and access to the collections.

Through this policy LMG ensures that:

- the collections are documented to minimum professional standards and in-house guidelines, and that plans are in place to ensure continuous improvement

- inventory and location control is in place to manage the information associated with items or groups of items and ensures we fulfil our obligations regarding documentation, tracking and care
- access to collections information is permitted and appropriately regulated
- collections information is protected, secure, cared for and preserved
- collections, the information associated with them and the policies in place to manage them are verified and audited

2. Legislation, standards and guidelines

This policy sits within a wider framework of sector best practice, legislation and University of Liverpool governance and policies. It interfaces with:

a) a number of policies in particular:

- Collection Management Policy (2024)
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy (2024)
- Collections Access Policy (2024)
- Collection Development Policy (2024)
- Information Security Policy v5.1 (2024)
- University Library Customer Charter
- Liverpool Arts and Culture Race Equality Manifesto

b) Legislation, in particular:

- Data Protection Act (2018)
- General Data Protection Legislation (GDPR)
- Freedom of Information Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Copyright legislation

c) And professional best practice, in particular:

- Museum Accreditation and Archives Service Accreditation standards
- BS EN 17820:2023 '*Conservation of Cultural Heritage — Specifications for the management of moveable cultural heritage collections*'
- FAIR Principles
- ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description, 2nd Ed 2000
- SPECTRUM
- DCRMR

- RDA

3. Object entry, exit and loans

a) Objects can enter CHS for a variety of reasons:

- Loans for exhibitions
- Digitisation and/or consultation
- Accessions into the collections
- Unsolicited donations

b) CHS ensures that:

- the Heritage Acquisition Group, and individual CHS services, maintain a record of all items offered for acquisition
- there is a step-by-step recorded process established for the selection, recommendation and approval of items or group of items to be accessioned into the collections or deaccessioned from them. This is overseen by the Heritage Acquisition Group
- that there is an accession record for all items that enter the collections. A record of accession is retained even if the item is subsequently removed
- that for digital accessions preservation metadata is captured at the point of accession in the digital asset register
- a record is kept of anything on loan to CHS
- all items can be identified and located at all times, including those on loan
- CHS does not accept responsibility for unsolicited donations, and these may be returned to donor or disposed of appropriately

c) For object exit there is step-by-step recorded process in place for any items that leave the premises. This applies to all outward loans and temporary transfer of material for example digitisation. All items being despatched will have their temporary location recorded in the collection management system, and items will be accompanied by their object exit form.

d) Where legal title of an object or group of objects selected for deaccession cannot be established, further advice will be sought and local or national regulations will be applied where appropriate, and this will be recorded in the relevant collection management system.

4. Cataloguing and documentation

CHS is committed to maintaining good practice and uses a variety of standards and good practice to document its collections.

a. CHS use collection management systems for creating and managing collections information. The systems enable:

- creation and management of CHS collections information
- CHS to have accountability for and control of the collections for which it is responsible
- compliance with national and international standards and sector best practice

b. Each item or collection of items must have as a minimum:

- an entry in the relevant collection management system, with the minimum data required by the relevant standard and in-house guidelines
- be labelled with its unique and persistent identifier
- storage location recorded

c. The minimum data requirements for archives, physical and digital, are compliant with:

- ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description, 2nd Ed 2000
- NCA rules for the Construction of Personal, Place & Corporate Names (1997)
- ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, (2004)
- Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names
- Library of Congress Subject Headings
- Art & Architecture Thesaurus

d. The minimum data requirements for books are compliant with:

- DCRMR
- RDA
- Library of Congress Subject Headings
- Library of Congress Name Authorities
- MARC21

e. The minimum data requirement for museums and gallery material are compliant with:

- SPECTRUM 5.1

f. Any items which form part of a digitisation project or other collections project must have the minimum levels of data required in the relevant collection management system.

g. Items which are lost or damaged will be recorded as so in the relevant collection management system.

h. There will be up to date procedures to guide the work of staff involved in documentation at all levels, and these will be communicated to staff and training given where necessary.

5. Location and movement control

Items or groups of items may be moved to different locations for different purposes of curation, conservation, research, security, training, engagement activities and exhibition. A change in location may be a permanent move or a temporary one. The move may be within the University campus, or to/from another organisation or individual.

At any point it must be possible to locate an item that LMG is responsible for, including items on loan, either within the relevant collection management system or via another navigational aid.

Movement of items can only take place when:

- there is a system in place to record the location of the items at all times
- the item has been assessed as to its suitability for being moved
- the new location has been assessed as to its suitability

6. Cataloguing backlogs

In order to address cataloguing backlogs, CHS is committed to:

- undertaking surveys of its collections in order to identify all material in their care
- establish cataloguing priorities based on research and engagement potential

7. Collection information enhancement

CHS have a number of processes in place to retrospectively enhance collections information. This includes but is not limited to:

- undertaking audits and surveys
- ensuring every item in the permanent collection is accessioned
- ensuring all collections have publicly accessible information in the collection management systems
- reviewing terminology in catalogues to ensure inclusive language is used
- enhancing collections management data held in the collection management systems; e.g. conservation and collections care data

Benefits of collection information enhancement work:

- to establish accountability for collections
- ensures LMG meets Museum and Archives Service Accreditation standards
- enable us to comply with our statutory requirements relating to data protection and copyright
- enable research and reveal neglected and/or purposefully overwritten histories that show the importance of the local cultural heritage of those who experience racism
- allow for better collection management, for example accurate location tracking and control
- improve our service to our researchers and communities in answering enquiries and enabling self-led research
- improve our service to our researchers and communities through exhibitions and other engagement and educational activities e.g. documentation of material with potential for different engagement activities

8. Access to collections information

LMG is committed to open access to its collection information in line with FAIR Principles, with due regard to legal and ethical constraints, for example data protection legislation.

a) Access to SCA collections information is provided 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/MEI, ESTC and WorldCat.

b) All of the oils and sculptures from the fine art collection are available on the Art UK website.

c) The Digital Heritage Lab provides access to digitised CHS collections and their metadata, as well as full text transcriptions. There is ongoing work is making digitised content metadata available to download.

d) SCA contribute to The National Archives' annual Accessions to Repositories Survey.

9. Security of collections information

All collection information will be kept secure and comply with relevant legislation including copyright and data protection.

In terms of IT security:

a) All software used for collections management, including collections information, must adhere to the University's minimum-security baseline as detailed in the Information Security Policy to comply with information and cyber security requirements as well as external security certifications.

b) The Library Systems Manager, along with the Head of SCA and Head of Museums and Galleries, are responsible for managing who has the authority to access, create, edit and update records in the collections management systems.

c) In the event of a breach of collections information security, the Systems Manager will be notified by the system supplier in accordance with their Incident Management Plan. The Systems Manager will then immediately inform the Director and Deputy Director of Libraries, Museums & Galleries, the Head of Special Collections & Archives and the Head of Museums & Galleries. If the incident concerns a loss or compromise of any personal data, the Systems Manager will also immediately report it to the University's Data Protection Officer and Cyber Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) via email.

d) The Library Systems Manager is responsible for maintaining an inventory of the systems used for the cataloguing and documentation of collections.

Security copies of Museum and Galleries Accession Registers:

a) Microfilm back-ups of older registers of the Art Collections exist. The current register has been digitised and the digital images are held on a central University server.

b) The physical accession registers for Museums and Galleries are kept in fireproof safes at the respective museums.

c) In future, Museums and Galleries are committed to creating Accession Registers for the museum object collections, which will be generated from the collection management system and retained in perpetuity

10. Collections information audit

A collections information audit will be undertaken as an ongoing process to support the mitigation of risk. The audit will involve reviewing item information to verify collection information procedures and policy are being followed and that LMG are discharging their responsibilities to the collections.

Review

Policy review date: November 2026