



Culture and City Development

Collections Documentation Policy

2015 - 2020

Portsmouth Museums
Governing body: Portsmouth City Council

Approved on:

Review date: March 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** Portsmouth Museums collections are a magnificent resource that we hold for the people of Portsmouth and for visitors to our city. They contribute to current city council policies and strategies and will continue to make major contributions to the cultural life of the city.
- 1.2** This document outlines the policy for the documentation of the collections. It is part of Portsmouth Museums Collections Management framework which also includes the Collections Development Policy and Plan, Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan, list of relevant legislation and standards, SPECTRUM download and the Procedures Manual.
- 1.3** A Collections Documentation Policy (CDocP) informs the work undertaken in documenting the museum's collection ensuring that the museum fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access to the city's collections by
- Improving accountability for the collections
 - Maintaining at least minimum professional standards in documentation
 - Enabling access to collections and associated information for staff and volunteers through the database
 - Extend access to objects and their associated information for the public
 - Strengthen the security of the collection

It is a required element for the Accreditation Scheme for museums and every museum should be able to say what the collections they hold and their location as part of public accountability.

- 1.4** The CDocP ensures that material is documented according to a recognised strategy, meeting national standards and with due regard to constraints upon the service, and serves as a reference document to guide decision making.

2. Strategic Context

Portsmouth Museums statement of purpose

Our purpose is to contribute to the vision for Portsmouth as the great waterfront city. We aim to do this by using the collections as a resource or tool to deliver the wider corporate agenda to the benefit of individuals, communities and the city itself. We believe that the inspirational, yet relevant, nature of our collections means that Museums and Archives are particularly well placed to deliver outcomes relating to learning, skills and wellbeing and high quality attractions offering excellent customer care. We understand that to achieve this the city's collections must be well cared for, organised and documented and that we have to

ensure that we retain for this and future generations the artefacts and records that matter most. We acknowledge that making such decisions is not easy.

We aim to ensure that the city's collections are available onsite, offsite and online.

This section of the policy briefly describes how the CDocP will be used to meet the Museums Strategy and support the Collections Development Policy.

The Portsmouth Museums Service Strategy 2015-2020 identifies 6 key aims for the service:

- Reflect the diversity of the city's culture and communities in our visitors and offer
- Provide inspirational opportunities for people to enjoy and learn from collections
- Build the profile and reputation of the Great Waterfront City by showcasing the national and international heritage of the city, and delivering excellent customer care
- Ensure sustainability and resilience through an entrepreneurial approach to income generation and partnerships
- Create a learning culture across the service to develop and empower staff
- Develop new audiences using digital technology

Through implementing the CDocP and maintaining the highest standards of collections documentation the service will make the city's collections widely available to communities to enjoy and learn from. By being able to easily locate and make accessible relevant objects and archive material and their associated information we can improve the experience of enquirers and researchers. Exhibitions and externally funded projects working with our communities can also be more easily supported.

Good collections documentation will also allow us to clearly identify how we represent our communities, identify gaps and support more targeted collecting.

The service can contribute directly to building the profile and reputation of our Great Waterfront City by showcasing the wealth of national and international heritage of the city. Accurate and accessible records of the collection and rigorous loan controls will enable us to lend high profile objects and images to both national and international venues, increasing Portsmouth's visibility. Adhering to national standards will mean that the service can borrow prestigious material from external organisations, making them accessible to our local communities and audiences.

Collections have the power to contribute directly to the sustainability and resilience of the service by supporting income generation and partnerships with other organisations. Through better collections knowledge we can licence a wider range of our images for reproduction or for merchandising, making them available

for people to share and enjoy in new ways. We will be able to support partners to achieve their aims.

Digital engagement with collections is becoming increasingly important, whether through online catalogues or through social media. Many of those interacting in this way are new audiences and this is an area that will be growing. The CDocP will help us to ensure that the quality of information accompanying digitised collections is of a good standard and will allow people direct access to that information.

3. Ethics, Legislation and Standards

In its documentation work the service is bound by several pieces of national and international legislation as laid out in the Collections Development Policy. The following pieces of legislation listed below are specifically relevant to documentation.

- *Data Protection Act 1998*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1998*
- Museums Association Code of Ethics
- *Copyright and Designs Patent Act, 1988* and subsequent amendments
- *Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom* (third edition, 2002).

The service will follow the standards for collections information laid down in PAS 197:2009 *Code of Practice for cultural collections management*.

The museums service will follow all relevant professional standards for documentation as laid out in SPECTRUM, the UK collections management standard. This is recognised nationally and internationally as the primary specification for collections management activity in museums.

Specifically, the service will meet the minimum standards for the SPECTRUM primary procedures, these are as follows:

- Object Entry **(S1)**
- Acquisition **(S2)**
- Loans in **(S3)**
- Loans out **(S4)**
- Location and movement control **(S5)**
- Cataloguing **(S6)**
- Object exit **(S7)**

S1 Object Entry

- deposits of objects or archives will be accepted for consideration for accessioning into the collections, loans for copying or display or for identification

- no object or archive should be deposited without the authorisation of a member of the collections team
- an entry form must be completed for all deposits and a receipt issued to the depositor
- objects or archives not accepted into the collections should be returned to the depositor. If the depositor cannot be contacted after a period of no less than 4 months of the date on the entry form PCC (i.e. the governing body) reserve the right to dispose of the item(s) as stated in the conditions set out on the entry form.
- objects or archives left for identification and not collected after a period of no less than 4 months of the date on the entry form will be disposed of as stated in the conditions set out on the entry form

S2 Acquisition

- criteria for acquisition are laid out in the Collections Development Policy 2013-2018
- transfer of title for all objects and archives will be sought in writing upon acquisition and copyright status clarified

S3 Loans In

- loans in will only be accepted as laid out in the Collections Development Policy
- loans in will be recorded using a loans in agreement as specified by Portsmouth Museums
- all loans in will have their condition noted on receipt to limit liability to PCC in case of damage

S4 Loans Out

- requests for loans out will be considered provided that the object(s) or archives are in a suitable condition and are not required for display or other use by Portsmouth Museums
- objects and archives may be loaned to other Accredited museums. Other organisations and venues will be considered, providing they meet the necessary standards for the care of objects.
- each application will be considered on its own merits and may require formal agreement by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport
- loans out will only be made if standard conditions of loan are met and in most cases will require the satisfactory completion of a facilities report and/or security supplement report
- all reasonable costs incurred in the preparation of items for loan will be recovered from the borrowing organisation

S5 Location and movement control

- an up to date location record will be maintained for all objects and archives in the collection

- a movement ticket must be completed for any object or archive move of more than 24 hours duration whether within the service or to an external site
- all storage areas must be locked at all times when not occupied
- objects on display must be within securely locked cases or fixed in a secure manner to walls or screens
- inventories must be maintained for all items on display

S6 Cataloguing

- new acquisitions will be catalogued as soon as possible and within not more than six months after acquisition

S7 Object exit

- object exit will adhere to the guidelines as laid out in the Collections Development Policy
- all accessioned objects and archives permanently leaving the museum service will have a formal report and exit form completed recording the reasons for disposal and the method used.
- appropriate authorisation must be given for each permanent exit

4. Accountability

Accountability principles for museums were laid down by the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) in 1993. The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what it is legally responsible (loans as well as permanent collections), and where each item is located.

These principles also conform to the requirements of PCC internal audit.

5. Access to Collections Information

The museum service is committed to documentation that allows access to information about the collections it holds and that this information is available as widely as possible within the restraints of relevant legislation. This includes to the following users:

- museum and other PCC staff
- academic researchers
- leisure interest researchers
- school and college students
- authors
- volunteers
- elected members

6. Security of Collections Information

The museum service is committed to ensuring the physical security of the records in its documentation systems, electronic and manual, and the long-term preservation of those records. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- collections information will be recorded on Portsmouth Museums collections management system
- the system will be maintained by Portsmouth City Council IS services and through subscription to the Modes Users Association
- regular back-ups will be made of the electronic database by PCC IS services and by the collections staff
- Additional security will be provided by having separate copies of the database held on secure laptops independent of the network copy
- regular updating and review of museum database software to ensure long term accessibility and readability
- paper records will be stored securely in a central registry and relevant information added as necessary
- data from the database will only be transferred using encrypted devices
- laptops holding separate copies of the database must be encrypted and stored securely while away from the museum premises

7. Intellectual Security of Collections Information

The Museum service is committed to ensuring the intellectual security of the records in its documentation systems whilst complying with Freedom of Information (FOI) and promoting research and access. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- adherence to the requirements of the Data Protection Act
- observing copyright regulations and respecting the rights of copyright holders
- respecting moral and intellectual rights in published and unpublished material

8. Review

8.1 The Collections Documentation Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the plan is next due for review is noted below.

8.2 This policy was drafted between March and April 2015

8.3 This policy was approved by the governing body on

8.4 The policy will be due for review in March 2020

Ref: KCB - Museums/2015 Accreditation/Collections Documentation Policy 2015-2020