



## **Portsmouth Museums**

# **Collections Documentation Policy**

**2020-2025**

Portsmouth Museums  
Governing body: Portsmouth City Council

Approved on: 19 March 2021

Review date: March 2025

# Collections Documentation Policy 2020-2025

## 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.

**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
- Extending access to objects and their associated information for the public
- Strengthening the security of the collection

It is a required element for the Accreditation Scheme for museums in England. 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

### Statement of purpose

Portsmouth Museums will contribute to the council's vision for Portsmouth as a happy, healthy city, rich in culture and creativity, with a thriving economy, where everyone has opportunities for lifelong learning and land and marine environments are protected and enhanced for future generations.

Our purpose is to:

To provide local communities and individuals with the opportunity to engage with the city's amazing heritage and people, to tell their story, be inspired, learn new things, gain new skills and feel happier and more optimistic about the future.

We will do this by:

- Being inclusive and reaching all parts of the city and society
- Benefiting residents and communities - enhancing wellbeing, raising aspirations
- Working together - as a team, with communities, with partners
- Embracing new opportunities and being a catalyst for change
- Ensuring that the environmental and historic data within the collections is shared
- Proving that we are doing it

To achieve this the city's collections must be accessible and available for use.

Through implementing the Collections Documentation Policy (CDocP) and maintaining the highest standards of documentation we will ensure that objects and their associated information can be readily located and made available for use by everyone - museum staff, communities, enquirers and researchers - and will support the ongoing digitisation of collections.

Good collections documentation will also enable us to identify the extent to which the city's collections are representative of its communities, to identify gaps and support more targeted collecting.

### 3. Ethics, Legislation and Standards

In its documentation work the service is bound by 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 2018* and the General Data Protection Regulation
- *Freedom of Information Act 2000*
- 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 and accessioning (**S2**)
- Location and movement control (**S3**)
- Inventory (**S4**)
- Cataloguing (**S5**)
- Object exit (**S6**)
- Loans in (**S7**)
- Loans out (**S8**)
- Documentation planning (**S9**)

#### **S1 Object Entry**

- deposits of objects will be accepted for consideration for accessioning into the collections, loans for copying or display or for identification
- no object 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
- all significant information relating to an object must be recorded on the entry form
- owners completing an entry form must be made aware of the terms and conditions of deposit and limits of insurance liability
- a copy of the entry form must remain with the object until the accession number has been marked on the object

- objects 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
- objects entering the collection must be assessed for potential risks such as infestation or hazardous substances

## **S2 Acquisition**

- criteria for acquisition are laid out in the Collections Development Policy 2020-2025
- transfer of title for all objects will be sought in writing upon acquisition and copyright status clarified
- all donors are fully aware of the terms and conditions by which their gift or bequest is accepted including that not all objects will always be on display or might be disposed of in the future
- each object entering the collection will be given a unique number and it will be securely labelled or marked with this number
- all documentation whether physical or digital relating to an object will be linked to the physical object by that unique number
- all accessions will be recorded on the CMS which provides a tamperproof record of all objects using their unique numbers
- security copies will be created as PDF files and stored separately to the main Modes data file

## **S3 Location and movement control**

- an up to date location record will be maintained for all objects in the collection using the CMS
- a movement ticket must be completed for any object move of more than 24 hours duration whether within the service or to an external site
- Information about an object's previous location must be recorded
- environmental monitoring records need to be maintained to ensure environmental standards are being met
- 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
- an object risk assessment must be completed for most object movements and appropriate insurance or indemnity cover must always be in place

## **S4 Inventory**

- we will be able to produce a complete list of every object or group of objects in the collection

- every object or group of objects will have a recorded name and brief description
- we will be able to identify who owns each object or group of objects in our care and how they were acquired
- types of collection will be easily distinguished from each other e.g. accessioned objects and handling collection
- where we do not meet these requirements there will be an appropriate plan to do so within an agreed time period

## **S5 Cataloguing**

- new acquisitions will be catalogued as soon as possible and within not more than six months after acquisition directly onto the CMS
- entries must meet the minimum inventory standard
- each object entering the collection will be given a unique number and it will be securely labelled or marked with this number
- catalogue records must cross-refer to relevant information held whether paper or digital records
- the CMS should have suitable indexes so that information can be retrieved to meet the needs of users
- the CMS should be regularly backed up

## **S6 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
- the CMS must be updated to reflect object exits whether permanent or temporary

## **S7 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 which will clearly lay out standards and terms and conditions
- all loans in will have their condition noted on receipt to limit liability to PCC in case of damage
- all loans in will be recorded in the loans in procedure file on the CMS including information about location and condition
- each loan in will have an individual file documenting details of the loan

## **S8 Loans Out**

- requests for loans out will be considered provided that the object(s) or archives are in a suitable condition, are not required for display or other use by Portsmouth Museums and that the purpose for the loan is clearly stated
- objects 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
- all loans out will be recorded in the loans out procedure file on the CMS
- all loans out will have a written agreement signed by both parties before the loan begins with clear reference to the care standards they agree to meet and other terms and conditions
- each loan out will have an individual file documenting details of the loan

## **S9 Documentation Planning**

Any work to improve collections information should be directed by priority areas identified in the documentation plan

## **5. 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.

### **Levels of Documentation**

The museum is committed to record significant information about the objects in its care so that each object we are legally responsible for (loans as well as long term collections) can be identified and located.

The majority of the collections will be documented to individual item level. However, for certain collection e.g. bulk archaeological material, it is neither feasible nor practical to document the material in this detail; these will be

documented at group level. We aim to have a basic 'inventory' record for all identified items and groups within the collection and most items will be documented to a more detailed catalogue level.

Inventory level: will include key information to allow an object in our care to be individually identified and verified. All accessioned items, loans in and loans out will be documented at this level

Catalogue level: where appropriate the collection will be documented to a more detailed level to include any known history and other additional information.

## **6. 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

### Computerisation

Most object records are computerised and we aim to be completely computerised by 2030, including subsidiary information from old catalogues and history files.

The service will use Modes Complete software, backup copies will be kept separately and securely. In order to ensure that our current electronic system does not become obsolete, the museum will remain informed of technological advances and ensure the long-term accessibility of the information held.

## **7. 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. We will achieve this in the following ways:

- collections information will be recorded on Portsmouth Museums collections management system (CMS) which is Modes Complete

- the system will be maintained by Portsmouth City Council IT services and through subscription to the Modes Users Association
- regular back-ups will be made of the electronic database by PCC IT 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 CMS 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

## **8. 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. We will achieve this 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

## **9. Review**

- 9.1** 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.
- 9.2** This policy was drafted between November 2020 and February 2021
- 9.3** This policy was approved by the governing body on 19 March 2021
- 9.4** The policy will be due for review in March 2025

Ref: KCB - Museums/2021 Accreditation/Collections Documentation Policy 2020-2025