

# Collection Documentation Policy

## Roman Baths

## Victoria Art Gallery

February 2015

### Policy Framework

This policy applies to the collections held in the Council's museums at The Victoria Art Gallery and the Roman Baths and is brought forward to meet current Arts Council England (ACE) Accreditation requirements.

Appropriate policy statements for the Fashion Museum were approved in 2014 as part of its Forward Plan.

This format of this document is consistent with current ACE guidance.

This document is part of a Collection Management framework for sound management of the Council's museum collections that also includes policies on Collection Development (last reviewed in 2013) and on Care and Conservation. At the Victoria Art Gallery these policies are supplemented by the ***Victoria Art Gallery Concise Documentation Guide***.

### Policy Review

ACE has advised that the next review of Accreditation for all three of the Council's museums will take place in 2018. This policy will therefore be brought forward for review in 2017, with the inclusion of the Fashion Museum, to harmonise policy documents for all three museums in preparation for that process.

### Introduction

Documentation is fundamental to good collections care. It makes possible the provision of good quality information to the public and improves internal accountability. It helps to keep collections secure, by recording what we have and where it is.

The collections are documented according to *Spectrum* standards – a national standard for museums – with records held on a collection database. That

database is backed up frequently and security copies of records from one collection are held off-site at a different museum.

The process of record-keeping is audited from time to time by Bath & North East Somerset Council auditors who advise and make recommendations for improvements to documentation systems.

There is no documentation backlog at the Victoria Art Gallery, but there is a backlog at the Roman Baths. The detailed plans prepared to support this Policy seek to eliminate that backlog in 2018.

## **Documentation Procedures: Definition and Policy**

### **Pre-Entry**

Definition: The management and documentation of the assessment of potential acquisitions.

*Policy: All objects that are potential acquisitions are assessed and this process is documented.*

### **Object Entry**

Definition: The management and documentation of new acquisitions and their associated information as they come into the collection. Where backlogs exist any object that does not currently have a number assigned shall be dealt with within this procedure.

*Policy: Entry forms are completed for all objects coming into the collection, with copies being given to the depositor and retained in supporting files.*

### **Loans In**

Definition: We only borrow objects for exhibition/display. This is always for a specific purpose and period, set out in loan in documentation.

*Policy: Loans In are documented with a Loan In Agreement. Copies of this are kept in Loans In files and also issued to the lender. An Entry form with a unique number is issued on arrival.*

### **Acquisition Documentation**

Definition: Documenting objects added to our collection and information associated with them.

*Policy: Acquisitions are issued with a unique accession number and details recorded in the Accessions Registers and on the collection database. All objects*

*in the collection are clearly marked with their accession number. Transfer of Title forms are completed.*

### **Inventory Control**

Definition: The maintenance of up-to-date records of objects for which the museum has a legal responsibility. This may include objects on loan, unaccessioned or previously undocumented objects, and temporarily deposited objects.

Policy: *Every object is individually recorded on the collection database and new information added as it becomes available.*

### **Location & Movement Control**

Definition: The maintenance of information recording past and current locations of objects in our collection.

Policy: *Accurate records are kept on the collection database of where all items in the collection are.*

### **Transport**

Definition: The management and documentation of the transport of objects for which the organisation is partially or fully responsible.

Policy: *The transportation of every object in the museum collection for purposes including loan out, conservation and display is recorded.*

### **Cataloguing**

Definition: The compilation and maintenance of key information, formally identifying and describing objects. It may include information concerning the provenance of objects and also collections management documentation e.g. details of acquisition, conservation, exhibition and loan history, and location history. It need not bring together in one location everything known about an object, but should provide cross-references to any other relevant information source known to the organisation.

Policy: *The museums create records that identify and describe every object in their care.*

### **Object Condition Checking**

Definition: The management and documentation of information about the condition of objects in the collection.

Policy: *Objects are checked on entry into the collection, and regularly checked while in store or on display. These assessments are recorded.*

### **Conservation & Collections Care**

Definition: The maintenance of records of conditions in display areas and stores and of any interventive or preventative conservation action.

Policy: *Environmental conditions are recorded in both stores and display areas. Records of any conservation intervention are kept.*

### **Risk Management**

Definition: The maintenance of information about potential threats to our collection and building, including information about possible preventive measures and disaster planning.

Policy: *We identify potential threats to our collection and document our planned responses in an Emergency Manual.*

### **Insurance Management**

Definition: Recording information about the insurance requirements of loans in and our own collection.

Policy: *Bath & North East Somerset Council provides insurance cover for the collections. Objects received on loan are always insured, either through the Council's own policy or the Government Indemnity Scheme.*

### **Valuation Control**

Definition: The management of information relating to the valuation of objects in the collection.

Policy: *We review and obtain new valuations for items in the collection at suitable intervals. These are recorded on the collection database.*

### **Audit**

Definition: The examination of objects and associated information to verify their location, authenticity, accuracy and relationships.

Policy: *Regular checks on information and objects are carried out internally to verify their location, authenticity, accuracy and relationships. We facilitate periodic external audits.*

### **Rights Management**

Definition: The maintenance of information about copyright of objects in our collection and on loan.

Policy: *Records are maintained of copyright information. The museums liaise with organisations such as DACS where necessary and ensure that artists' copyright is respected.*

## **Use of Collections**

Definition: The management and documentation of all uses of and services based on collections and objects in the organisation. These include exhibition and display, education handling collections and the operation of objects, research and enquiries, reproduction and the commercial use of objects and associated documentary archives. Users include staff (and volunteers) or the public, whether in person, by letter, telephone or any other means of communication.

Policy: *The museums keep records of every way in which every object in the collections is used in the displays that they present and all collection engagement opportunities that they provide.*

## **Object Exit Documentation**

Definition: The management and documentation of objects leaving our premises.

Policy: *Records are made of any object leaving the building, in an exit form and on the collection database. In the case of loans out, loan conditions and duration are set out in a loan agreement form. A condition report will normally be included.*

## **Loans Out**

Definition: *Documenting and managing the loan of objects to other organisations or individuals for a specific period of time and for a specific purpose, normally exhibition/display, but including research, conservation, photography and education.*

Policy: Every Loan Out made by the Roman Baths Museum is documented in a Loan Out Agreement prior to exit, and an Object Exit Form and receipt upon release.

## **Loss and Damage**

Definition: Managing and documenting an efficient response to the discovery of loss of, or damage to, object(s) whilst in the care of the organisation.

Policy: *The museums document the process of loss or damage to objects in their care.*

## **Deaccession and Disposal**

Definition: The management of disposal (the transfer, or destruction of objects) and of deaccession (the formal sanctioning and documenting of the disposal).

*Policy: The museums fully document the process of disposal to ensure openness and transparency.*

### **Retrospective Documentation**

Definition: The improvement of the standard of information about objects and collections to meet SPECTRUM Minimum Standards by the documentation of new information for existing objects and collections.

*Policy: The outstanding backlog in documentation at the Roman Baths will be eradicated in 2018 through the implementation of its Documentation Plan.*