

Victoria Art Gallery Documentation Policy

Policy Framework

This policy applies to the collections held in the Victoria Art Gallery and is brought forward to meet current Accreditation requirements.

The format of this document is consistent with current Arts Council England guidance.

This document is part of a Collection Management framework for sound management of the Council's collections that also includes policies on Collection Development and on Care and Conservation.

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 is in the collection and where it is.

The collections are documented according to Spectrum, a national standard for museums, with records held on Micromusée, the museum's collection database. The 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.

Documentation Procedures: Definition and Policy

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. Acquisitions are issued with a unique accession number and details recorded in the accession registers and on the collection database. All objects in the collection are clearly marked with their accession number.

Acquisition and accessioning

Definition: Accessioning is the formal commitment of the gallery to the long-term care of an object. The management, legal ownership and documentation of the assessment of potential acquisitions.

Policy: All objects that are potential acquisitions are assessed against the collection development policy and this process is documented. This information is stored in artist files or saved in acquisition folders. Transfer of Title forms are completed with the previous owner with any acquisition.

Location and 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 and have been, starting when Micromusée was introduced.

Inventory

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.

Cataloguing

Definition: The compilation and maintenance of key information, formally identifying and describing objects. It may include information concerning the provenance of objects and collections management documentation, such as exhibition and loan information, details of acquisition, conservation 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 gallery creates records that identify and describe every object in their care. Certain fields, such as title, dimensions and legal status, are mandatory when creating and maintaining a record. Records are updated as required.

Object exit

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 in (borrowing objects)

Definition: The management of objects borrowed for a fixed period of time and for a specific purpose.

Policy: The museum only borrows objects for exhibition or display. This is always for a specific purpose and period, set out in loan in documentation. Incoming loans are documented with a Loan Agreement. Copies of this are saved in loan folders and issued to the lender. An entry form with a unique number is issued on arrival.

Loans out (lending objects)

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 outgoing loan is documented by a loan agreement prior to exit. An exit form is issued on release of the loan and a receipt upon return. A copy is kept with the artist files or saved in loan folders.

Documentation planning

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: There is no documentation backlog at the Victoria Art Gallery. Any new information gathered on the collection will be retained on the collections database or the relevant folders.

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 gallery keeps records of every way in which an object in the collections is used in the displays that it presents and all collection engagement opportunities that it provides.

Condition checking and technical assessment

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. If a conservator is used, they should be professionally accredited.

Collections care and conservation

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 in the collections database or in folders.

Valuation

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

Policy: The gallery reviews and obtains new valuations for items in the collection at suitable intervals. These are recorded on the collection database.

Insurance and indemnity

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 on loan are always insured, either through the Council's own policy or the Government Indemnity Scheme.

Emergency planning for collections

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

Policy: The museum identifies potential threats to the collection and documents the planned responses in an Emergency Manual.

Damage and loss

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 gallery documents the process of loss or damage to objects in its care. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal and consultation with internal and external curatorial staff.

Deaccessioning 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: Any deaccession would be in line with the Museum Association's Code of Ethics. The gallery fully documents the process of disposal to ensure openness and transparency. This includes any decisions made, the reasons for disposal and the date and method of disposal.

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 gallery liaises with organisations such as DACS where necessary and ensures that artists' copyright is respected.

Reproduction

Definition: Managing and recording the creation of images and other kinds of reproduction of objects, including digital copies.

Policy: All objects should have images on the collections database, preferably digital high-definition photography that can be used for image reproductions. Photographing the collection is a continual process, staff and professional photographers are used to produce images.

Collections review

Definition: The identification of strengths and weaknesses in the collection a part of a wider development policy on acquisition and disposal.

Policy: The collection is reviewed by the Collections Manager for gaps for acquisition and potential deaccessions. The Museum Association's Code of Ethics would be followed when any items are considered for disposal.

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. The gallery facilitates periodic external audits.