

Collections Development Policy

October 2013

BACKGROUND.

Museum and record office governing bodies are required to meet minimum standards of collections care and development in order to qualify for the Government's Accreditation standard. Accreditation marks governing bodies as worthy guardians of unique public collections of historic, artistic and archival material which they hold in trust for the public good. Accreditation also qualifies museums and record offices for grant-aid from a number of charitable trusts and grant-giving bodies.

Previously these requirements have been met through a separate Collections Management Policy and Acquisition & Disposal Policy. These were last adopted by the then Executive Member for Tourism Leisure & Culture in 2005 and are due for updating. However the current requirement is now that they are brought together in one Collections Development Policy.

Accreditation, or working towards Accreditation by an independent museum, is a criterion of grant-aid to independent museums in Bath and North East Somerset.

1. CORPORATE POLICY FRAMEWORK.

1.1 The Council's Vision:

Bath and North East Somerset is an area:

- where everyone fulfils their potential;
- with lively and active communities; and
- with unique places and beautiful surroundings.

The acquisition and development of museum and archive collections in public custody supports this vision by creating educational opportunities, adding to the quality of life, building community identity and furthering the appeal of the district as a destination for tourism. The Museum and Record Office collections make a major contribution to cultural life in Bath and North East Somerset and provide opportunities for individuals and groups to derive personal and collective intellectual fulfilment through them.

The Record Office also acts as the corporate memory of the Council. It supports the Council value of being open and engaging by maintaining and making available evidence of its actions for the benefit of all.

1.2 The Council's Objectives:

The Council has identified three objectives to help it realise its vision.

Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone:

The Museums and Record Office consult with people in the local community to find better ways of providing access to original material. A variety of means such as permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, lectures, public study facilities, workshops, special events, store tours, retail merchandise and digital access via the Internet are employed. They also work to provide good quality physical access to these resources by implementing improvements in building design and offering safe, neutral spaces in which people can study, debate and enjoy themselves.

Heritage Services engages in project work with groups of young people and provides events and stimulating activities to which local young people are admitted without charge. The Service has an apprenticeship scheme for which local young people are eligible. Work placements are also sometimes available for young people, while volunteer opportunities are available to those of all ages. Education is recognised as a core function of Museums and Record Offices, offering unique learning opportunities to people of all ages through formal and informal programmes.

Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live:

The Museums and Record Office occupy important listed buildings that form part of the historic landscape of the city. They care for these buildings and animate and interpret them through exhibitions and special events and provide an essential resource for interpretation and understanding of many other buildings throughout the World Heritage Site and the wider district. They work to protect their collections by operating security standards recommended by relevant professional bodies; modern fears that crime levels today are greater than in the past can be alleviated by studies of historic Court and prison records from the Record Office. The Record Office also holds a significant quantity of records relating to buildings and their history, dating from the seventeenth century to the present day. These records are widely used by those carrying out building development in order to ensure that they meet planning and listed building requirements and create new developments which take account of the historic architecture of the city.

Building a stronger economy:

The Service balances the needs of visitors, with developing the commercial potential and improving the physical care of its collections and buildings to provide sustainable growth. In so doing it makes a net financial contribution to the Council.

The Service also implements measures to reduce energy consumption; promote efficiency in its use of resources and care in the disposal of its waste. This includes managing the physical environment of collections and maintaining their relevance through an active approach to acquisition and disposal to ensure that resources are only expended on worthwhile material.

1.3 Legislative framework.

The Council's power to operate its Museums derives from the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*. The Council's Record Office is empowered to collect under the *Local Government (Records) Act 1962*, the *Local Government Act 1972*, ss.224-229 and the *Local Government Reorganisation (Property Etc.) Order 1986* s.12. Bath Record Office is appointed as a 'place of deposit' under the *Public Records Act 1958* for certain public records specified in that Act and will collect those public records.

1.4 Heritage Services 'statement of purpose'.

The Council has adopted a statement of purpose for Heritage Services that supports its three main objectives. The Collections Development Policy derives from this statement:

HERITAGE SERVICES For learning, inspiration and enjoyment

1.5 Heritage Services Service Aims:

- to enhance the quality of life for residents of Bath & North East Somerset;
- to maximise public enjoyment of the Council's world class heritage;
- to enable people to learn from the activities and achievements of past and present societies;
- to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures;
- to contribute to the district's economic prosperity through our Business Plan.

1.6 To achieve these Service Aims, we:

- protect and develop the Council's unique historic collections and public buildings;
- plan for and invest in their sustainability;
- interpret them through displays, study facilities, learning programmes and special events;
- mount the best available exhibitions from other regional and national collections;
- sell high quality merchandise to complement our services;
- hire out historic venues for a wide range of events and activities;
- train and develop our staff to realise their full potential;
- consult widely with users and stakeholders on an ongoing basis;
- use information technology in accessible and imaginative ways;
- work in partnership with others wherever appropriate.

1.7 Heritage Services Business Aims.

Through our business plan we aim for ongoing sustainability in three equally important and inter-dependent activities:

- Conservation** – preserving our heritage for present and future generations to enjoy
- Customer Care** – meeting the needs of all our audiences, customers and guests
- Commercial Success** – maintaining our positive contribution to the Council's budget

To achieve these Business Aims, we devote equal attention to these three core activities.

2. PURPOSE OF THE COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY.

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to define the areas of collecting, and the constraints within which collecting will take place, by the Museums and Record Office governed by Bath & North East Somerset Council. These are the Roman Baths Museum; the Victoria Art Gallery; the Fashion Museum and the Bath Record Office.
- 2.2 The Policy follows the Museums Association's revised *Code of Ethics for Museums (2008)*, which has been adopted by the Council and the revised guidelines and template (2011) laid down by Arts Council England (ACE) *Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom: Accreditation Standard*. For those elements of the policy which relate solely to the Record Office, it takes account of the National Archives *Collection Development Tools and Guidance*, (2011) and the Archive Accreditation Scheme *Draft Guidance* (2012).
- 2.3 The Policy recognises the legitimate collecting aims of other organisations. It seeks not to acquire material to the exclusion of other bodies but to ensure that original material relating to the social and cultural history of Bath and North East Somerset, together with the records of Bath & North East Somerset Council, are secured in public custodianship in perpetuity by an institution which can give them appropriate care and make them publicly accessible.

- 2.4 In all areas of collecting relating to the Museums, it is ensured that the authority obtains absolute legal title to material acquired and that no material is acquired to which the authority cannot obtain legal title or whose prior ownership is in doubt. The Record Office will where possible obtain legal title to material acquired, but will in certain cases acquire material on deposit (long-term loan) where legal title to the material remains with the depositor or owner. It will also acquire records by transfer from departments of Bath & North East Somerset Council, and by transfer as public records from relevant bodies. In all cases, the terms under which material is donated or bequeathed to a Museum or the Record Office will be clearly recorded and understood by all parties.
- 2.5 In all areas of collecting, documentation accompanying the material acquired is considered an essential part of the acquisition as it enriches and interprets the item. An item may be refused if the accompanying documentation is considered inadequate.
- 2.6 The Policy provides a platform for the future development of the existing collections of Romano-British archaeology, fashionable dress, fine art and local historical records which are the main subject areas represented in the Council's Museums and Record Office. Richly diverse, these collections cover a span of seven thousand years and extend to include social history, local history, Council and former Corporation records, coins, antique furniture, local silver, decorative art, dress history and spa equipment.

3. POLICY REVIEW.

- 3.1 The Policy is intended to be responsive to changes in Council objectives and national standards and guidance, and to this end will be reviewed at least once every five years. The next review will be in or before November 2018. Arts Council England (ACE) or its successor body will be notified of any changes to this Policy and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

4. COLLECTION DESCRIPTIONS.

4.1 Roman Baths Museum.

Nature of collections:

The collections are principally archaeological, but also include a diverse local history collection and a major collection of numismatics which together tell the story of 7,000 years of human activity around the hot springs at Bath. The collection is Designated in its entirety by ACE as one of outstanding national significance.

Archaeology: In the prehistoric collections there are flint and stone objects, mostly from the downs to the north and south of Bath, but including a small but distinctive group of mesolithic flint tools found in excavations in and around the hot springs. There is also Bronze Age metalwork, the most significant pieces being from the Monkswood Hoard. There are small quantities of prehistoric pottery, human and faunal remains including objects from the Iron Age hillfort at Little Solsbury.

In the Roman collection, the bulk of material relates to the Baths and Temple site in which the museum is situated, consisting of building blocks, architectural fragments, sculptural reliefs, inscriptions, tile and lead and bronze plumbing fittings. There are similar objects from sites elsewhere in Bath including architectural fragments, tomb sculptures and stone coffins. In addition, there are many small objects in copper alloy, iron and bone as well as substantial quantities of pottery, tile, human and animal bone and samples of wall plaster, mosaic tesserae and window glass.

From elsewhere in the district there are objects from the Roman villa at Combe Hay and there is an important collection of material from Keynsham which includes Roman objects from the Durley Hill Roman villa and the Somerdale Roman house.

The post-Roman collections are much smaller including remains from a Saxon cemetery at Bath and from the medieval settlement at Eckweek, excavated in 1988 in advance of the Peasedown St. John by-pass. Important objects from the Medieval Abbey site at Keynsham are also held. The post-medieval objects are principally ceramic and glass.

The Roman Baths Museum is one of only two museums in the former County of Avon which have been approved by English Heritage for the deposition of excavation material and their associated archives. The museum collections are added to continually through receipt of excavation material as well as occasional stray finds. Most archaeological acquisitions result from development work in the district.

Numismatics: There is a strong collection of Roman coins of which the most important are those excavated from the King's Spring. There are also coins from the Saxon mint at Bath as well as a number of ancient coins (mostly Roman), a representative collection of English coinage from the Saxon period to the 20th century, miscellaneous foreign coins, commemorative medals, jettons and reckoning counters. There is also a very comprehensive collection of local 17th, 18th and 19th century tokens, tickets, inn checks and banknotes from Bath and north eastern Somerset.

Local History: These collections consist principally of objects relating to the city and immediate environs of Bath. They include an important collection of Spa related equipment rescued in the 1980s, which was enhanced in the 1990s by the creation of an oral history archive for the Spa and a large group of weights and measures transferred from Trading Standards. There is also a significant and substantial collection of old photographs, postcards and glass negatives, mostly of Bath but also of nearby villages.

Title to the collection of civic regalia and silver of the former Bath City Council was transferred to the Charter Trustees on local government re-organisation in 1996, but curatorial advice is still given to the Trustees by the Roman Baths Museum when required.

4.2 **Bath Record Office.**

Nature of collections:

Bath is the only city in the UK to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, selected for its 18th century townscape, built around the ancient thermal spa. The archive collections of the Record Office are exceptional for their quality and completeness in documenting the transition from medieval market-town to fashionable Georgian resort, preserved today as one of Britain's top visitor destinations. The entire Record Office collection is Designated by The National Archives (TNA) as one of outstanding national and international importance.

The strength and quality of the collections lies in their wide-ranging subject matter and richness of content, touching on almost every aspect of life in the developing city throughout the last 400 years: records of parishes, schools, crime and punishment, hospitals and medicine, charities, societies, commerce, and entertainment.

From the 16th and 17th centuries onwards the Corporation's vital role in the community is demonstrated through its extensive and detailed minutes, accounts, court records, coroner's, rating and licensing records. The inherited responsibilities of the Corporation have added a wealth of rich and varied records from the 19th and 20th centuries relating to Bath Board of Guardians, Bath Police Force, Rating and Valuation, Highways, and the Urban Sanitary Authority. The role played by the Corporation of Bath as a major property developer from the 17th century to the present is represented by an outstanding collection of title deeds, complemented by major collections from local solicitors.

Since the creation of the Record Office in 1967 many substantial and historically important archive collections have been received from private sources. In common with every other local authority Record Office, many important collections are received on indefinite loan from their owners, as a means of providing public access to unique historical sources. Most significant of these are the records of the Pulteney estate, (the landed estate of the 18th century Pulteney family, whose property covered the whole of the parish of Bathwick); records of local solicitors (Stone, King & Wardle; Titley Long; Chesterman & Sons; Vezey & Co.); the Royal Bath & West of England Society (an 18th century agricultural society based in Bath for 200 years); Beresford-Smith (a 19th century architectural practice in continuous existence for 150 years). Archive collections deemed 'Public Records' (e.g. of the law courts and hospitals) are held by agreement with TNA, and constitute Crown property.

Many smaller collections received on loan or as a gift from private sources demonstrate the richness of the city's character and illustrate the lives of its people: business records from shopkeepers and solicitors; records and registers of the many non-conformist churches; charities, clubs and societies; photographs and prints; and family papers including diaries and correspondence of private individuals.

4.3 The Fashion Museum.

Nature of Collections:

The Museum is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of fashionable dress and associated material in the UK and in the world and contains in excess of 80,000 objects. The collection is Designated in its entirety by ACE as one with outstanding national significance.

Fashionable dress: the collection includes items of fashionable dress and accessories to dress for women and for men. There is also a significant of dress worn by children, including some excellent early pieces. The Fashion Museum collection includes objects principally from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries; but there are also significant collections of embroidered 17th century dress, and a good and expanding collection of work by 21st century designers, many of which are acquired through the museum's unique Dress of the Year scheme.

The work of leading names in 20th century couture and fashion history from Lucile and Worth to Alexander McQueen and Vivienne Westwood are included in the Fashion Museum collection.

Significant discrete collections include the 20th century 'wardrobe' collections of Mary Chamberlain Carnegie Lady Mary Curzon, the Rani of Pudukkottai, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Dame Alicia Markova, Sir Roy Strong and Mark Read.

The breadth of the historic collections ensures that dress worn by a wide spectrum of wearers is featured in the Fashion Museum collections. The collection is not merely a 'name check' of designers' work.

The span of the types of garment that are featured in the collection is broad: from principle items of dress such as day and evening dresses, coats and jackets through to the full range of fashion accessories to dress from shoes and hats, to gloves, parasols and stockings.

The Fashion Museum collection also includes excellent collections of the nuts and bolts and hidden items of fashion: underwear, collars, cuffs, all of which have been vital throughout dress history for making up a total fashion look.

Photographs, prints, drawings, archival material and magazines:

The Fashion Museum collection includes sizeable fashion archive collections, including fashion magazines, fashion photographs and drawings, fashion plates, knitting and

dressmaking patterns, historic costume books, trade and designers' archives and costume historians' papers.

Fashion: the collection is of fashionable dress. The term is deliberately interpreted widely to embrace the complexity of the fashion system throughout the period when dress survives. Thus, for example the collection includes couture pieces in the 20th century as well as stylish examples of ready to wear and dressmaker fashions inspired or informed by named designers. Equally, the collection also includes 'street' and other fashions which have in turned inspired fashion designers.

Objects on Loan: the collection includes a number of 'long-term' loans historically associated with the Fashion Museum. Many of these pieces are pre-eminent and of relevance to the collection of fashionable dress: for example the Silver Tissue Dress and embroidered 17th century pieces on loan from the Vaughan Family Trust, and the historic gloves on loan from the Glove Collection Trust. We will seek to continue these two loans.

The collection also includes a number of individual objects, including 18th century dresses and 17th century embroidered pieces. We will seek to convert the loans and acquire these pieces for the Fashion Museum Collection.

In addition, from time to time, the Fashion Museum borrows pieces for specific display projects for short time-limited periods, for example, a collection of 10 dresses worn by Diana Princess of Wales for the exhibition The Diana Dresses in 2010.

Uniforms: the Fashion Museum collection includes some items of uniform, including peers robes. Some are on loan: some acquired in the past. We will seek to return the loans, and to review whether the other pieces should remain in the Fashion Museum collection.

Dolls: the Fashion Museum collection includes a significant collection of dolls. This is not an area of the collection to which we will add. In the future, a review needs to be undertaken of the doll collection.

Household ephemera: the collection includes furniture, ceramics and glass and other household ephemera. This material was collected originally for the purpose of props for display. In 2010 one section of this collection (furniture) was the subject of a Disposal Review, against a test of relevance. It is the intention to follow this first review with subsequent similar reviews of other sections of the collection (ceramics, glass, household ephemera, children's books), none of which are relevant to the collection of fashionable dress.

4.4 **Victoria Art Gallery.**

Nature of collections:

The Victoria Art Gallery's collections of fine and decorative art date from the 16th century to the present day. To a significant extent they tell the story of art in the city of Bath and the surrounding area, reflecting the demand from visitors and residents alike for pictorial records of themselves, the local landscape and architecture. Most of the 10,500 items in the collection were acquired by way of gift and bequest following the laying of the Gallery's foundation stone in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, although judicious purchasing of modern pictures and sculptures has augmented the 20th/21st century holdings.

Fine Art: the bulk of the collection consists of British drawings, paintings, watercolours and miniatures and silhouettes from the 17th to the 21st century. There are also small collections of sculpture and of European works of art. Of particular significance are the collections of prints, drawings and watercolours associated with Georgian Bath. Reflecting the history of artistic practice in Bath, the Gallery holds a large collection of portraits produced by artists who worked in the local area, including Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Thomas Lawrence. The Kimball Collection, donated by etcher Katharine Kimball in the mid-20th century, consists of

19th and 20th century prints by British and Continental artists. Of particular note is a small collection of rare early lithographic stones by Thomas Barker of Bath.

Decorative Art: the collections include porcelain, pottery, watches and glass dating from the 17th to the 19th century. The bulk of this material is British and the collections of Delftware and of English drinking glasses are of particular note, albeit lacking 19th century examples of the latter.

5. THEMES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE COLLECTING.

5.1 Roman Baths Museum.

Archaeology: the museum will only normally collect within the boundaries of Bath and North East Somerset. In those parts of North East Somerset where another museum has a particularly strong tradition of collecting (i.e. Bristol Museum at Camerton) a decision to collect will only follow consultation with that other museum and consideration of such matters as the wishes of the donor, ease of access for students and scholars, potential for public display, access to conservation resources and grant-aid.

Numismatics: the museum will continue to develop its collection of locally associated objects from the whole district of Bath and North East Somerset.

Local history: the museum will take a leading role in promoting the acquisition of objects of local and social historical significance by appropriately accredited museums and other organisations in Bath and North East Somerset by:

- (a) itself collecting objects and other media relating to the City of Bath and its environs, particularly the history of the Spa and the Pump Room and other buildings occupied by the Service.
- (b) offering professional advice and encouragement and alerting other museums and kindred organizations in the district to opportunities to develop and sustain community based collections of local history.

5.2 Bath Record Office.

The Bath Record Office collection will be developed through the acquisition of archives and records relating to the area of Bath and North East Somerset. This may include all aspects of local history and organisations, businesses, persons or events associated with the area. The Record Office will continue to receive by transfer records of Bath and North East Somerset Council, as well as public records of a local nature for which it is appointed a place of deposit.

Since 1996 there has been an agreement with Somerset Archive & Record Service that newly discovered material relating to Bath and North East Somerset which complements or forms part of an existing collection already housed at Somerset Record Office will be directed there in the first instance, and this policy continues that agreement.

An exception to the geographical limit boundary may be made where a collection includes material relating to areas other than Bath and North East Somerset, but the division of the collection would involve the breaking-up of an archival entity. In this case the relevant other Record Offices will be advised and agreement sought on the most appropriate depository for the collection.

The development of the collection may encompass records in any form and include manuscripts and maps, printed and machine-readable texts, photographs, pictures, film, digital and electronic records, and all communication media.

5.3 **The Fashion Museum.**

The Museum's acquisition objectives break down into three areas:

- (1) to fill gaps in the collection of fashionable dress;
- (2) to build on strengths in the collection; and
- (3) to ensure that the collection is up to date.

These are general statements, and research and ongoing evaluation (of both the collection and of fashionable dress within society) will always be needed to break each area down into a more specific list of objects to seek to acquire.

In terms of (3) ensuring that the collection is up to date, the Fashion Museum will continue to seek to acquire at least one item of fashionable dress from the current year through the well-established Dress of the Year scheme.

In addition, the Fashion Museum seeks to convert or return the historic loans in to the collection, and to maintain the loans from The Vaughan Family Trust and the Glove Collection Trust.

In the future, the Fashion Museum will undertake a Disposal Review project in respect of the collection of household ephemera and children's books.

5.4 **Victoria Art Gallery.**

The Gallery seeks to build on and improve its collections with the acquisition of items which complement existing holdings.

Priorities include the following:

- Good quality works depicting the City of Bath World Heritage Site and surrounding area, in particular showing buildings which are of architectural significance and also places that have changed beyond recognition.
- Good quality topographical works depicting locations in Bath and North East Somerset currently poorly represented in the collection.
- Good quality works with a strong local provenance and/or by local artists, i.e. those who were born in or trained in or worked in the local area, including post-1945 art and craft by artists who taught/studied at Bath Academy of Art or were members of the Brotherhood of Ruralists when it was based at Wellow near Bath. Works by the following artists would be of particular benefit to the collection: Thomas Gainsborough (the collection lacks a Bath period landscape, for example), Thomas Lawrence, Joseph Wright of Derby, Robert Edge Pine, William Scott, Malcolm Hughes, Richard Allen, Michael Craig-Martin, Bryan Wynter, Terry Frost, David Inshaw and a work from the 1960s by Howard Hodgkin.
- Good quality works relating to significant aspects of local history, for example Bath's Georgian architecture, the Bath Blitz, spa bathing and medical treatments, transport, sport, entertainment, or local industries and trades.
- Good quality works by artists of national and international significance that would complement the existing collection and enable us to present a more art historically comprehensive display.
- Items of decorative art associated with or made in Bath and North East Somerset including modern craftspeople such as Rachael Woodman, Takeshi Yasuda and Felicity Aylieff.
- Items of decorative art that complement our existing collection, in particular glass and studio ceramics.

6. THEMES AND PRIORITIES FOR RATIONALISATION OF COLLECTIONS.

6.1 Roman Baths Museum.

The Roman Baths undertook rationalisation of its collections in 2000 and 2001 when a collection of cast iron objects and architectural fragments was dispersed to other more appropriate institutions. Since then some duplicate material from the historic furniture collection has also been disposed of. All of these disposals followed the procedures recommended by the national agencies in being at the time and were the subject of specific reports approved by the relevant Cabinet member. The consequence of these disposals is that the collection now has a high degree of synergy with the current Collection Development Policy and no further disposals are proposed within the time frame of this policy.

6.2 Bath Record Office.

There are no proposals for disposal of any catalogued records within the time frame of this policy.

6.3 The Fashion Museum.

The collection includes some furniture, ceramics and glass and other household ephemera. This material was collected originally for the purpose of props for display. In 2010 one section of this collection (furniture) was the subject of a Disposal Review, against a test of relevance. It is the intention to follow this first review with subsequent similar reviews of other sections of the collection (ceramics, glass, household ephemera, children's books), none of which are relevant to the core collection of fashionable dress.

6.4 Victoria Art Gallery.

The Victoria Art Gallery has systematically reviewed many accessions particularly of historic furniture that were once allocated to its collections but were no longer relevant to collection objectives. This resulted in two de-accessioning reports and subsequent disposal of some of the objects. Both of these disposals followed the procedures recommended by the national agencies in being at the time and were the subject of specific reports approved by the relevant Cabinet member on each occasion.

The collection still includes many items that should be considered for de-accessioning, when time and resources allow, in particular a large number of poor quality drawings and watercolours by amateur artists, of subjects with no local relevance.

7. LIMITATIONS ON COLLECTING.

- 7.1 The Museums recognise their responsibility, in acquiring additions to their collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. The Museums and Record Office will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

8. COLLECTING POLICIES OF OTHER MUSEUMS AND RECORD OFFICES.

- 8.1 The Museums and the Record Office will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museums and record offices:

Victoria and Albert Museum
Gallery of Costume, Manchester City Art Galleries
The Museum of London
National Museums of Scotland
National Portrait Gallery
Tate Britain
The British Museum
The National Archives
Somerset Heritage Service
Wiltshire Record Office
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
Bristol Record Office
Radstock Museum

9. ACQUISITIONS NOT COVERED BY THE POLICY.

- 9.1 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums or record offices.

10. ACQUISITION PROCEDURES.

- 10.1 The museums will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 10.2 In particular, the Museums and the Record Office will not acquire any object, record or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object, record or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).
- 10.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Museums and the Record Office will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2005.
- 10.4 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museums will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority
- 10.5 The Museums will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures. In England the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure as defined by the Treasure Act 1996.
- 10.6 Any exceptions to the above clauses 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, or 9.5 will only be because the museum or Record Office is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin;
- acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded;
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin;
- in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970;

In these cases the Museum and the Record Office will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

10.7 If a Museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11. SPOILIATION.

11.1 The Museums will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

12. THE REPATRIATION AND RESTITUTION OF OBJECTS AND HUMAN REMAINS.

12.1 A museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 13.1, 13.3 and 13.8 below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

The disposal of human remains will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

13. MANAGEMENT OF MUSEUM ARCHIVES.

13.1 As the Museums hold and intend to acquire supporting archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, their governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

14. DISPOSAL PROCEDURES (Museums only).

14.1 Disposal preliminaries:

The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.

By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound

curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

14.2 Motivation for disposal and method of disposal.

When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 14.3-14.8 will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.

The Museums and Record Office will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

Any financial benefit arising from disposal will be assigned to the care and development of the collections as set out in paragraph 14.5 below. This supports the Council's duty of care in discharging its trusteeship of the collections which have been acquired for public benefit rather than as financial investments.

14.3 The disposal decision-making process.

Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

14.4 Responsibility for disposal decision-making.

A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

14.5 Use of proceeds of sale.

Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Arts Council England.

The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

14.6 Disposal by gift or sale.

Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

14.7 Disposal by exchange.

The museums will not dispose of items by exchange.

Retaining an option to dispose by exchange can lead to objects which are no longer of benefit being retained indefinitely in hope of a suitable exchange opportunity arising. This can waste resources on retention costs and delay or prevent the value of unwanted items being assigned to the benefit of the wider collection and its development. Disposal by exchange can also lead to the full and correct value of collections not being recognised or realised.

14.8 Documenting disposal.

Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with the SPECTRUM procedure on de-accession and disposal.

15. Disposal Procedures (Record Office).

- 15.1. Collections acquired by the Record Office may consist of a very large number of individual items. While it will be clear that the collection as a whole meets the collecting policy, individual items within it may not. It may not always be possible to inspect the whole collection at the time of acquisition.
- 15.2 All records within collections will be appraised either at the time of accessioning or later at the time of cataloguing (or both). With the agreement of depositors and donors those records not deemed worthy of permanent preservation will be destroyed or returned to the depositor or donor, while any records which do not meet the collections policy but which are worthy of permanent preservation may be transferred to a more appropriate repository.
- 15.3 The Record Office sometimes acquires by purchase a unit of records (for example a lot at auction) where some of the items do not fall into the Collecting Policy. In such cases, the items will where possible be transferred to a more appropriate repository.