

Jewish Museum London

Collections development policy

Name of museum: Jewish Museum London

Name of governing body: The Board of Trustees of the Jewish Museum London

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 23 September 2013

Date at which this policy is due for review: September 2018

1. Museum's statement of purpose

The Jewish Museum collects, preserves, interprets and exhibits material relating to Jewish history, culture and religious life. We draw on the Jewish experience as a focus for the exploration of identity and heritage in a multicultural society, actively engaging with the shared experiences represented in the diverse cultural heritage of London, Britain and the wider world.

As a forum for education, learning and dialogue between different faiths and communities, we interpret our world class collections for the broadest audience, putting the visitor experience at the heart of everything we do. We provide a welcoming, dynamic and multi-layered visitor offer – in the Museum, virtually through our web site and in the community through our outreach work – building understanding and respect, challenging stereotypes and combating prejudice in all its forms.

We are at a very exciting stage in our development: the experience of the three years since reopening has enabled us to identify both opportunities and challenges for the Museum's future, which inform and shape our aims.

2. An overview of current collections

The Jewish Museum collects material to illustrate the history and culture of Jewish people in Britain, and their religious traditions and practices. It seeks to reflect the diverse roots of the Jewish community in Britain, including Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions. The museum collects material dating from the medieval period through to the present day and that reflects the diverse roots of Jewish people in Britain. It defines such roots to include the countries of origin of all Jewish people living in Britain, for example, Eastern and Central Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The collections may be broken down as follows:

Silver and other metals

The collections primarily consist of religious items used in the synagogue (eg Torah ornaments), home (eg Hanukah lamps) or by individuals (eg amulets). There are also secular objects, often connected with communal activities (eg trophies, regalia), domestic items (eg cooking equipment) and personal items (eg jewellery). There are several items salvaged from concentration camps (eg cutlery).

Glass and ceramics

The collection includes some religious material (eg 17th century synagogue lamp), and a wide range of historical material from the 18th century to the present, including china figurines, tea services and other commemorative and domestic objects.

Costume and textiles

There is a large collection of synagogue textiles, including Ark curtains and Torah mantles, ranging in period from the 17th to the 20th century, originating from synagogues across Britain and beyond, and reflecting the range of diasporic traditions. Smaller religious textiles include items used in the home such as *hallah* covers, or items of personal piety such as prayer shawls. Non-religious textiles include a range of domestic items (eg tablecloths) and several banners from communal organisations, including one of only two surviving Jewish trade union banners.

Costumes are primarily late 19th and 20th century, including wedding dresses, uniforms, clothing accessories (eg handbags, shoes and hats) and baby clothes (including circumcision gowns). They also reflect diverse traditions of Jewish costume throughout the world, including Baghdadi Indian clothes and a Bukharian *barmitzvah* robe. There are also two concentration camp uniforms and several costumes from Yiddish theatre actors. Future collecting of costumes and textiles will prioritise acquiring material not currently represented in the collections. Appropriate consideration must be given to storage and display requirements.

Prints and drawings

In the Alfred Rubens collection, the museum holds one of the most important collections of prints of Jewish interest in the world, including depictions of religious ceremonies and practices, Jewish costume, portraits of famous Jews, and caricatures by masters such as Rowlandson and Gillray. It also holds additional prints and drawings collected by the museum, including work by Simeon Solomon, and examples of micrography. There is a small amount of framed material. The Museum continues to collect prints and drawings that reflect the range of Jewish life, including examples of contemporary prints.

Paintings and miniatures

The museum holds a small collection of primarily 18th and 19th century oil paintings and miniatures of historical interest. However, paintings are no longer actively collected, except where they relate to key themes to be addressed in the Museum's displays.

Archaeology, coins, medals and seals

There is a small collection of classical, Middle Eastern and medieval coins, medals and seals, and occasional archaeological pieces (eg Sumerian clay bowl). The museum now only collects material in this category of significant historical or religious interest (eg war medals).

Furniture

A small collection of mostly wooden furniture, including an 18th century lottery wheel, a monumental 17th century Venetian Ark, a circumcision chair, and late 19th century chairs from East London Synagogue and the Workers' Circle Friendly Society. Additional holdings in this area can only be considered with reference to available storage.

Working life objects

A range of material from the late 19th and early 20th century, primarily relating to working life in the East End of London. Trades currently represented include tailoring, cabinet making, baking, printing, hat making and cigarette making. The material includes tailors

and cabinet makers work benches and tools, tailors' dummies, sewing machines, moulds for hat making, bakers' paddles and a dough trough. The museum also holds the large camera and tripod used by the East End wedding photographer, Boris Bennett. Further collecting in this area will prioritise under-represented trades or processes, and more recent industries or areas of work. Offers of additional tailoring collections, in particular, must be reviewed with care.

Books

The collection includes both religious and secular books, printed in a range of languages, including English, Hebrew, Yiddish and German, from the 17th to the 20th century. There are also bound religious registers. Books in the collection are treated as museum objects, rather than reference sources. The museum does not seek to acquire further books unless they are appropriate for potential display. However, it does collect reference holdings for the museum library. Representative religious texts are not collected. In the event of disposal, any religious books must be disposed of according to appropriate religious custom.

Manuscripts, documents and ephemera

There is a wide range of manuscripts, documents and ephemera in the collection, of both religious and secular origin, ranging in date from the 17th century to the present day, with a heavy bias towards 19th and 20th century ephemera. This includes synagogue records and ephemera, *ketubot* (marriage certificates), amulets and other religious documentation, trade cards, bookplates, posters, invitations, scrapbooks, account books and ledgers, newspapers, magazines and annual reports. Subject areas include working life, politics, social activities and Jewish communal organisations. Personal papers and records include letters, diaries, certificates, ID cards and passports. There is a fine collection of posters, playbills and other ephemera relating to Yiddish theatre in London. The museum continues to collect actively in this field, while avoiding duplication of items in the collection.

Photographs

The museum holds both original photographs and an archive of historical and contemporary images. Original photographs are primarily gelatin silver prints, with a very small number of daguerrotypes and albumen prints. There are also large framed items and photographs housed in albums and scrapbooks. The majority of images in the collection are copy prints in the Photographic Archive, generated from original photographs loaned to the museum for this purpose. Originally in the format of 35mm negatives, these images are now produced digitally and housed on the museum's computer network.

Photographs illustrate the full range of the museum's collecting interests, including people, places, activities and areas of origin. The collections are particularly strong in their representation of early-mid 20th century Jewish life in London. The museum actively collects photographs of all aspects of Jewish life, and is particularly interested in documenting contemporary life. It does not collect unidentified photographs. All new acquisitions must have their copyright status assessed and cleared (where possible) and take data protection issues into account.

Oral history interviews

The museum has almost 500 audio tapes in its Oral History Archive, consisting primarily of life history or subject specific interviews. These reflect personal histories, working life and communal activities, and include interviews with refugees from Nazism, Holocaust survivors and others who have come to Britain from around the world. Copyright in all interviews is cleared at point of recording. The museum will continue to

build on its oral history collection, reflecting key aspects of the British Jewish experience. Future interviews may be in either audio or audio-visual (digital) formats.

Audio-visual collections

The museum holds a small archive of audio-visual material. This is primarily reference material on VHS, with a few examples of archival footage. Copyright for reference material has generally not been cleared. Archival film will not be collected in its original format, although digital copies may be made. Future oral history interviews may be in an A-V format.

3. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The museum collects the following:

- Jewish ceremonial art of high artistic merit and/or historical significance, including contemporary Judaica.
- Material that illustrates British Jewish history, or reflects the experiences of Jewish people in Britain and their diverse roots.
- Material relating to the Holocaust and refugees from Nazi Europe, in relation to those who have settled in Britain.

Specific future collecting priorities include:

- Material relating to Jewish life in Britain from 1945 to the present, currently under-represented in the museum's collections
- Material that reflects the diversity of contemporary Jewish life in Britain.
- Material to link with the museum's planned programme of special exhibitions

The museum does not collect unidentified material, duplicates of material already held in the collection, photocopies, gramophone records, or representative prayer books with no particular distinction or rarity. The museum should not acquire material that requires immediate remedial conservation, except in cases of exceptional significance.

4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

At present the museum does not actively pursue a programme and rationalisation and disposal. We do recognise the importance of responsible, curatorially-motivated disposal as part of the museum's long-term collections policy, in order to increase public benefit derived from museum collections and we are looking to work towards this as part of our documentation plan. We have begun to identify themes and priorities for rationalisation (these include photocopies, gramophone records and books) and we will be working towards identifying other material as we work towards our documentation plan. Once the museum is in a position to consider rationalisation and disposal more actively, any disposal will be in accordance with paragraphs 13e or 13f of this document and the Museums Association "Disposals Toolkit", taking external advice when necessary.

5. Limitations on collecting

The museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

6. Collecting policies of other museums

The museum 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 museum(s):

Ben Uri Gallery, Institute of Contemporary History & Wiener Library, Irish Jewish Museum, Manchester Jewish Museum, Scottish Jewish Archives, Jewish Military Museum

7. Policy review procedure

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above. Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

8. Acquisitions not covered by the policy

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.

9. Acquisition procedures

a. The museum 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.

b. In particular, the museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object 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).

c. 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 museum 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 in 2005.

d. The museum will not acquire any biological or geological material.

e. The museum 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, Wales and Northern Ireland 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.

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the museum 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 will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g. The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10. Spoliation

The museum 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.

11. Management of archives

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

12. Disposal procedures

Disposal preliminaries

- a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

- a. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- b. In exceptional cases, the disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below in paragraphs 13g-13m and 13o/s will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
 - c. The disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
 - d. The disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
 - e. The disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored

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.

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, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

- a. 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 the Arts Council England.
- b. 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.

Disposal by gift or sale

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.

Disposal by exchange

- a. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

- b. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 13a-13d and 13g-13h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 13p-13s.
- c. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- d. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- e. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

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 SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

DECLARATION

This policy was formally adopted by the Trustees of the Jewish Museum at a Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2013.

Signed: Lord Young of Graffham

Title: Chairman: Trustees of the Jewish Museum

Date: