

Documentation Policy

Jewish Museum London

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Documentation Policy is to guide the work which the Jewish Museum London does in the field of collections documentation.

Museum documentation is essential in enabling care of and access to museum collections. It helps people to learn about collections and the society and culture they represent. Documentation aids the museum to manage collections better, and create better public services such as exhibitions, education and publications.

Museum documentation should record information that allows an object to be identified and document its history and use. Documentation may use manual records such as card indexes and computer-based records such as collections management databases.

2. ETHICS AND LEGISLATION

Collections information will be recorded in compliance with all legal requirements, including the Data Protection Act (1988) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Collections information will be acquired, stored, managed and used in compliance with the Museum Associations *Code of Ethics for Museums* and to SPECTRUM standards.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

The museum will maintain a level of collections documentation which will allow it to identify and locate all items for which it is legally responsible, including loans.

- Each object in the collection should have an entry record.
- Each object in the collection should be entered in the accessions register or loans register, and have assigned a unique identifying number such as an accession number or loan number.
- Each object in the collection should be marked or labelled with its identity number.
- Records will be kept detailing the location and movement of all objects in the collection; exit records must be kept for any object that leaves the museum premises.
- Indexes or other information retrieval facilities must be maintained, to allow searching by accession number and at least one other method such as donor or location. Best practice will make provision for additional indexing e.g. subject, simple name.
- Collection records must be securely stored. A duplicate record should be maintained at a separate site from the original as a security measure. Automated data must be backed up regularly.
- Where there are incomplete records, the museum will develop a plan to address and eliminate the backlog.
- Records of deaccessioned objects will be maintained.
- The curatorial staff has responsibility for the creation, maintenance and care of collections records, and monitoring access to them. Mechanisms for the auditing of records should be provided.

4. STANDARDS

The Museum is obliged to meet minimum collections management standards under the terms of Accreditation administered by the Arts Council.

SPECTRUM: The UK Collections Management Standard sets out a series of procedures to ensure good practice in all aspects of documentation for collections management. Accreditation requires that the minimum standards for the *SPECTRUM* primary procedures.

The Jewish Museum will create records of all objects in its collections according to the *SPECTRUM* standard. All records should fulfil the minimum requirements of Accreditation, and, wherever possible, exceed these minimum standards. The minimum standards are:

- Object Entry
- Acquisition
- Loan In
- Loan Out
- Location and Movement Control
- Cataloguing
- Object exit

4.1 Object Entry

Deposits of material for the Jewish Museum London will be accepted for the following purposes:

- Consideration for accessioning into the collections
- Consideration for copying for entry into the digital photographic archive
- Objects on loan for display or identification

An entry form will be completed and signed by the depositor and a museum signatory for all items, or group of items entering the museum. The items will be identified with an entry number.

A deposit will be returned if:

- The object is deemed not suitable for accessioning into the collections
- The object has been copied for entry into the museum's photograph archive
- The loan period, for display or identification, has ended

Objects that are not accepted into the collections should be returned to the depositor.

4.2 Acquisition

See Acquisition and Disposal Policy

4.3 Loans In

Lending and borrowing objects is an integral part of the Museum's work, to make its collections accessible to a wide range of audiences. Objects may be loaned for exhibition, research, study and educational purposes. Loans may be arranged on a short term basis e.g. for a temporary exhibition, or as a long term loan, to complement accessioned material in a museum's own collection.

The Museum accepts material on short term loan for temporary exhibitions, and long term loans.

Loans are approved by the Curator. If necessary, the advice of the Collections Committee may be sought. Long term loans are accepted where they bring substantial benefit to the collections, in the view of museum staff and advisors.

Where possible, lenders will be encouraged to convert long term loans to donations. However, long term loans are required in certain circumstances e.g. for collections of material from communal institutions which cannot legally dispose of them.

Loans in are for a fixed period of time, agreed in advance with the lender. Long term loans are for a minimum period of five years.

All loans in will be covered by written loan agreements. All loans in will have a condition check when they enter the Museum and before their return.

Conservation work on loaned items will only be arranged in exceptional circumstances, in full co-operation with the lender.

All objects loaned to the Museum will receive the same standards of care as that of the Museum's own collections.

Nail-to-nail insurance for short term loans for exhibitions is available to a certain value. A valuation total for all material borrowed for exhibition should be calculated as part of the exhibition planning process. Objects may be insured under the Government Indemnity Scheme if necessary.

Long term loans are not usually insured by the Museum. Lenders may insure objects; some historic loans at Camden Town are covered by the Government Indemnity Scheme.

The curatorial staff has responsibility for the creation and maintenance of loan records, and monitoring the status of loans.

4.4 Loans out

The Museum will loan material to accredited museums or public exhibition venues that can demonstrate equivalent standards in care, both nationally and internationally.

Loans are approved by the Curator. If necessary, the advice of the Collections Committee may be sought.

The borrowing institution must provide information about transport and environmental and security conditions in the exhibition. The condition of the object, when measured against this information, will determine the approval of a loan.

Loans out are for a fixed period of time, agreed in advance with the borrowing institution.

All loans out will be covered by written loan agreements.

All costs associated with the loan e.g. transport will be covered by the borrower. The Museum's collections are automatically covered anywhere in the UK, but insurance must be arranged by borrowers outside the UK.

Only objects in a stable condition will be loaned out. A condition check will be made before the object is loaned, and on its return. If any conservation treatment is required for an object to be loaned, the costs will normally be met by the borrower.

The curatorial staff has responsibility for arranging and carrying out packing and shipping of objects. Where appropriate, specialist art handlers may be used. Handling standards should be stipulated as part of the contract.

The curatorial staff has responsibility for the creation and maintenance of loan records and supporting documentation such as export licenses, and monitoring the status of loans.

4.5 Location and Movement Control

No person should move an object or access or amend a location record without the authorisation of the Curatorial Team.

A record of up-to-date locations must be maintained for all objects in the Collection and added to the Adlib database.

A record of all previous locations of an object should be maintained on the Adlib database, to act as an audit trail.

4.6 Cataloguing

New acquisitions will be catalogued on the Adlib database as soon as possible and within not more than six months after acquisition.

Each record will include:

- Accession number
- Acquisition Method
- Acquisition Source
- Brief description
- Condition
- Creator
- Current Location
- Institution name
- Material
- Measurements
- Object name
- Production dating
- Title

4.7 Object Exit

Object exit occurs as a result of:

- Return of unwanted gifts
- Return of loans in
- Return of objects left for identification
- Loans out
- Transfer to another organisation
- Deaccession / disposal (including destruction of the object)

An exit form is completed for all objects exiting the museum, and is signed by a member of the Curatorial Team and the remover.

Any object exit must be authorised by the Curator of Social History or Curator of Judaica.

5. SECURITY OF COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

Collections information is recorded on the museum's collection management system (Adlib). This is backed up nightly by our external IT contractors, React, at a remote site.

The museum will endeavour to make sure all information held in accession registers and object history files is recorded on the collection management system. The museum will create facsimile copies of accession registers and store in a secure location away from the museum site.

6. ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

The Museum must provide public access to collections and collections information, while ensuring that security and preservation of the collections are not compromised.

The museum will aspire to enable access to collection information for staff, researchers and other users.

Access to collections information is an essential component in providing full public access to objects, by allowing the public to view information relevant to the creation and use of an object.

Public access to collections information must not compromise security and privacy protection. Donor information, location, valuation and other sensitive areas will not be made available to the public. Access to this information will be disabled on the collection management system when viewed by researchers and visitors.

Access may be made through manual or computerised systems, specifically the museum's collection management system (Adlib) or the online catalogue:
<http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/search-our-collections-new>.

Appropriate security measures must be built into computerised systems that are made available to the public. Possible measures may include maintaining a public access database on a separate server, or the use of firewalls.

Providing access to detailed catalogue information, including images, increases access while reducing unnecessary handling of original objects, and will be encouraged.

All relevant legislation relating to freedom of information, Data Protection and copyright will be adhered to.

7. KEEPING RECORDS UP TO DATE

The museum will endeavour to regularly check paper and electronic records, and security copies of them, to make sure that they are not becoming obsolete.