

Documentation Policy Statement

Documentation Procedures 1.1

Kingston Heritage Service

Revised October 2016



Documentation Policy Statement

The governing body within the Council is the Place Directorate. Policies are approved by the Director of Place and were approved on:

Roy Thompson

Director of Place

Date at which policy due for review: October 2020

1. Introduction

Documentation underpins every aspect of museum activity. Recording collection information is central to being accountable for the collections, their accessibility, management, research, study and use.

Our policy for the documentation of the collections is to ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that we fulfil our guardianship, stewardship and access responsibilities. Through implementation of this policy our objective is to:

- improve accountability for the collections;
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information and attain the very highest standards wherever possible;
- extend access to collection information;
- Strengthen the security of the collections.

Many of our records are held on collections management system CALM. Data from the previous collections management system, AdLib, has now been transferred onto CALM and we have recently reached the stage where we are able to update and enhance these records. By Spring 2017 we aim to go live with Calmview, a portal via which the public can search these records, in order to increase access.

We also ensure that paper files are kept in a safe separate location and the collection management system is saved daily by CALM host Axiell.

We take a commonsense approach as to the level to which we document material. Ideally for the majority of the collections, especially those that have high monetary or scientific value, our curatorial staff will document to individual item level. However, for certain collections, such as bulk archaeological excavation material, it is neither feasible nor practical to document the material in this detail, and we will document items at group level. We therefore aim to have a basic 'inventory' record for all identified items and groups within the collection,

whilst some items will be documented to a more detailed 'catalogue' level. These are defined below.

3. Definitions

We will document our collections to either Inventory or Catalogue level, as described below:

- Inventory level: This includes sufficient key information to allow any object(s) in our care to be individually identified and verified. All accessioned items, loans in and out, and any other unaccessioned objects as appropriate are documented at this level.
- Catalogue level: professional staff will identify the collections that merit further, more detailed, documentation, thus raising the standard of information to catalogue level. Such documentation will include the known history of a specimen, and references to any relevant publication etc.

4. Accountability

Definition of accountability

The Museums and Galleries Commission has defined the essence of accountability as follows:

"to enable museums to fulfil their fundamental responsibilities for collections and the information associated with them. The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what it is legally responsible (this includes loans as well as permanent collections), and where each item is located." (MGC 1993)

Controlled access to sensitive information

All requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Data Protection Act (1998) and the Environmental Information Regulation (2004). We will review requests for confidential data such as donor information, environmental information, valuations or site details on a case by case basis, and in accordance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

Security against loss of irreplaceable collection information

We have in place measures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or computerised. We will update all manual and computerised records as appropriate. Nightly backups will be made to secure digital data. Where collection information is wholly computerised and managed centrally we will make backup copies of all key files, and where considered appropriate, under the council IT policy. Axiell, who hosts the CALM database, does daily backups which are kept for 30 days.

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Gillian Butler, Heritage Team Leader and Borough Archivist and Charlotte Samuels, Curator.