Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service Documentation Policy

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2016

Colchester+Ipswich Museums

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Documentation Policy will guide the work of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service in the field of collections documentation.

1.2 The aim of the Documentation Policy is to ensure that the museum fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access of collections.

- Improve accountability for collections
- Maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation
- Extend access to collection information
- Strengthen the security of the collections

1.3 The purpose of the Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service's (CIMS) documentation system is to:

- Establish exactly what is in the collections at any one time
- Establish the legal rights and responsibilities for those collections
- Maintain an up to date location record for every object in the collections
- Link objects with their associated information, including provenance, associations and collections management history
- Enable retrieval of objects and their associated information
- Enable access to objects and their associated information for staff and volunteers through the Modes Complete database
- Enable access in the future to objects and their associated information for the public through an online database
- Provide insurance information for Colchester and Ipswich Borough Councils
- Provide audit information for Colchester and Ipswich Borough Councils

2.0 General

2.1 Collections information is recorded in compliance with all current UK legal requirements, including the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

2.2 Collections information is acquired, stored, managed and used in compliance with The Museum Association's 'Code of Ethics for Museums' and to SPECTRUM Standards. The former states under the principle of 'Stewardship of collections' (page 10) that 'Museums and those who work in

and with them should acquire, care for, exhibit and loan collections with transparency and competency in order to generate knowledge and engage the public with collections' ('Code of Ethics for Museums', Museums Association, 6th Edition 2015).

2.3 Collections information is recorded on the CIMS Collections Management System – Modes Complete. In order to preserve the database, the system is maintained by Colchester Borough Council's IT Provider and through subscription to the MODES Users Association. The system is backed up weekly, monthly, and six-monthly by ICT services and manual backups are undertaken by collections staff after substantial changes have been made.

2.4 A partial copy of the handwritten Accession Registers is also in digital format which can be printed out as required.

2.5 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service is committed to improving access to collections information and is actively tackling collections backlogs where these exist.

3.0 **Object entry**

3.1 Deposits of material will be accepted for the following purposes:

- Consideration for accessioning into the collections
- Objects on loan for display or identification

3.2 No object should be deposited without the authorisation of the Collections and Learning Team

3.3 An entry form must be completed for all deposits. These are held in perpetuity as a record of the object.

3.4 A deposit will be returned if:

- The object is deemed not suitable for accessioning into the collections
- The loan period, for display or identification, has ended.

3.5 Objects that are not accepted into the collections will be returned to the depositor. If the depositor cannot be contacted after a period of no less than three months and after formal notice in writing, the object will be disposed of in accordance with the procedures set out in the Collections Development Policy.

3.6 Loans and identifications that are not collected / returned after a period of no less than three months from the end of the agreed loan period will be disposed of in accordance with the procedures set out in the Collections

Development Policy and after seeking appropriate legal advice.

4.0 Acquisition

See separate Collections Development Policies for Colchester and Ipswich.

5.0 History Files

5.1 CIMS collects and stores contextual and historical information relating to objects in the collection. This is digitally attached to a record where possible.

5.2 The information is cross-referenced with the object and details stored or referenced on the Modes Complete catalogue.

6.0 Labelling and Marking

6.1 All objects in the collections are labelled and / or marked in order to maintain a connection between an object or specimen and its associated information.

6.2 Labelling and marking techniques used are:

- Appropriate for the object
- Durable yet reversible

7.0 Loans-In

7.1 Loans-In may be accepted for the following purposes:

- Exhibition or display
- Photography or publication
- Research

7.2 Loans-In will be accepted for a minimum of one week and a maximum of five years. Loans-In can only be authorised by the Heritage Manager and / or the Senior Collections and Learning Curator. The lender's title to the object will be established using due diligence.

7.3 CIMS are responsible for the 'nail to nail' insurance of the object(s) and they shall be insured at the valuations advised by the lender and agreed between the lender and CIMS.

7.4 The object(s) borrowed will normally be housed in secure storage areas or displayed in securely locked and glazed cases or, if two-dimensional works, securely fixed to the wall. The object(s) will be housed in areas of appropriate temperature and relative humidity, and in appropriate lux and UV levels at all times.

7.5 The object(s) loaned will not be taken to any other address without the prior consent of the lender.

7.6 No label or other identifying marking will be moved or obliterated.

7.7 No object will be cleaned, conserved or treated by the borrower under any circumstances whatsoever without the prior written consent of the lender. The object(s) will not be handled unnecessarily. On return, the loan will be packed in the same way as it was received.

7.8 Acknowledgement will be made to the lender in a form and style agreed with the lender.

7.9 Access to the loaned object(s) will be allowed at all reasonable times to any properly authorised officer of the lender.

7.10 CIMS shall immediately inform the lender of any damage to, deterioration in the condition of, or loss of any object on loan. This notification will be confirmed in writing.

7.11 Taking of photographs using non-flash photography for non-commercial use is permitted for CIMS staff. CIMS usually permits members of the public to take photographs in the galleries using non-flash photography provided it is solely for personal use and not for publication. In the case of borrowed objects permission will be sought from the lender. CIMS considers requests to take photographs of or film objects for commercial purposes on a case by case basis. If the request relates to borrowed objects permission will be sought from the lender

7.12 It is the lender's responsibility to inform CIMS of any change of contact details or circumstances. CIMS do not accept any responsibility to trace the lender should circumstances change and reserve the right to dispose of the objects(s) after a period of three months from the end of the agreed loan period as set out above.

7.13 If an owner has died, CIMS will contact the executor if known, or seek legal advice with a view to either acquiring or disposing of the object(s) as set out above.

8.0 **Loans-Out**

8.1 Requests for loans out will be considered provided that the object(s) are in a suitable condition and are not required for display or other use by CIMS.

8.2 Objects may be loaned to other Accredited museums. Other organisations and venues will be considered, providing that they meet necessary standards for the care of the objects. Objects may also be loaned to conservators as and when necessary for work to be carried out. Objects may be loaned for exhibition tours.

8.3 Loans can be for up to five years, after which they may be considered

for renewal, if appropriate.

8.4 Loans can be authorised by the Heritage Manager or as appropriate by the relevant Portfolio Holder or through the current Council decision-making protocol.

9.0 **Loan Conditions**

9.1 Applications for loans should be submitted not less than six months before the date for which the loan is requested.

9.2 The borrower shall be responsible for all costs as a result of the loan, including transport from and to CIMS venues.

9.3 CIMS may determine that a member of staff will act as a courier and supervise the unpacking / mounting and subsequent dismounting / packing of the object(s) in the borrower's institution, in which case the costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence of the courier will be met by the borrower.

9.4 The borrower shall be responsible for the insurance of the object(s). Unless otherwise stated on the Outward Loan Form the borrower shall insure the object(s) loaned at a valuation determined by CIMS against all risks 'nail to nail', throughout their absence from and return to CIMS. The insurance policy must be approved by the Heritage Manager or his / her representative. The object(s) will not be released to the borrower until evidence of insurance cover is produced. The valuation for insurance purposes will be stated on the Outward Loan form.

9.5 The object(s) borrowed for exhibition must normally be housed or displayed in securely locked and glazed cases or, if two-dimensional works, securely fixed to the wall. The object(s) borrowed for exhibition must be shown in a properly invigilated gallery. The object(s) must be housed in areas of appropriate temperature and relative humidity, and in appropriate lux and UV levels at all times as advised by CIMS conservators.

9.6 The object(s) loaned must not be taken to any address(es) other than specified on the Outward Loan Form.

9.7 No label or other identifying marking will be moved or obliterated.

9.8 No object is to be cleaned, conserved or treated by the borrower. The object(s) will not be handled unnecessarily. On return, the loan must be packed in the same way as it was received and in its original packing materials.

9.9 Acknowledgement will be made to the relevant local authority which owns

the object (Ipswich Borough Council or Colchester Borough Council) in the display, exhibition notices and literature in a form and style specified by the Heritage Manager. CIMS will also be supplied with a copy of any publication issued in connection with the loan.

9.10 The object(s) will not be reproduced in any medium, including photographs, without the prior written consent of the Heritage Manager and, if applicable, the copyright holder.

9.11 Access to the loaned object(s) will be allowed at all reasonable times to any authorised officer of CIMS.

9.12 CIMS shall be immediately informed of any damage to, deterioration in the condition of, or loss of any object on loan. This notification must be confirmed in writing.

9.13 Requests to renew, transfer or cease the loan should be made in writing to CIMS at the earliest opportunity.

9.14 The borrower indemnifies Colchester / Ipswich Borough Council and its officers against all claims or losses, howsoever caused, arising out of the loan of the object(s) specified on the Outward Loan Form and for so long as the object(s) are in the custody of the borrower.

10.0 **Cataloguing**

10.1 New acquisitions will be catalogued as soon as possible and within not more than six months after acquisition.

10.2 Each record will include the following information:

- Accession number (under object identity)
- Object name (under identification)
- Number of objects or parts (include in brief description)
- Brief description (under identification)
- Acquisition method and date (under acquisition)
- Current location (under object location)
- Reference to available images (under reproduction)

10.3 If appropriate, each record will also include:

- Entry form number (under other identity)
- Name and date of recorder (under recorder)
- Classification information, e.g. SHIC code (under identification)
- Further description information, e.g. dimensions, inscriptions, material, date (under description)
- Any field collection information (under field collection)

- Production information, e.g. maker, technique (under production)
- Other historical information, e.g. previous use or associations (under association)
- References to published bibliographic information (under references)
- References to collections management information e.g. loans in or out, condition check, conservation, exhibition, reproduction, rights

10.4 As much information as possible about the object and its history should be recorded, or referenced within the record.

11.0 Location and Movement Control

11.1 No person should move an object or access or amend a location record without the authorisation of the Collections Information Officer.

11.2 A record of up-to-date locations must be maintained for all objects in the collection.

11.3 All storage areas must be locked at all times and only accessed under the authorisation of the Senior Collections and Learning Curator.

11.4 Objects on display must be within locked or screwed shut display cases or secured to the wall with security fittings.

11.5 No object must be left unattended outside normal working hours without completing a movement slip and updating the location on the Modes Complete database.

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

12.0 Object Exit

12.1 Object exit occurs during the following:

- 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)
- Move to the external store

12.2 Any object exit must be agreed by the Heritage Manager or the Senior

Collections and Learning Curator and may be subject to the current Council decision-making protocol.

13.0 Retrospective Documentation

13.1 In the event of a documentation backlog, this will be addressed as soon as possible using a retrospective documentation plan, detailing the appropriate timescales and staff resources.

13.2 The retrospective documentation plan will ensure that the documentation backlog meets Spectrum standards.

Supporting Documents

Colchester and Ipswich Museums Collections Development Policy: Colchester 2015
Colchester and Ipswich Museums Collections Development Policy: Ipswich 2014
Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service Access Policy 2016
Retrospective Documentation Plan: Colchester 2016
Retrospective Documentation Plan: Ipswich 2016