SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP COLLECTION INFORMATION AND ACCESS POLICY
OCTOBER 2018

This Policy is part of the Science Museum Group's Collections Management Policy framework, which consists of:

- SMG Collection Development Strategy
- SMG Collecting Policy Statements
- SMG Collection Information and Access Policy
- SMG Conservation Policy

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GOVERNING BODY: **BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM**
DATE FOR APPROVAL: **2018**
DATE FOR REVIEW: **2020**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Science Museum Group (SMG) is a non-departmental public body that aspires to the highest museum standards in the care and preservation of collections, scholarship, programming, learning and advocacy for its subject areas.

1.2. SMG incorporates the Science Museum in London, the National Railway Museum in York, Locomotion in Shildon, the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester and the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford, as well as two collections facilities: the National Collections Centre at Wroughton and Blythe House in London.

1.3. The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum was established under the *National Heritage Act 1983* and has a responsibility to:
   • Care for, preserve and add to the objects in the collections
   • Exhibit the objects in the collections to the public
   • Make objects in the collections available for study and research
   • Promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of science and technology

1.4. SMG recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the *Museum Association Code of Ethics (2016)*, the *Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland) Code of Ethics (2018)* and the *SMG Group Ethics Policy (2016)*.

1.5. The aim of the SMG Collection Information & Access Policy is to ensure that SMG fulfils its responsibilities to manage and provide access to its collections and associated information, in line with its vision of *'a society that celebrates science, technology and engineering and their impact on our lives, now and in the future'*.

2. COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

2.1. This policy sets out SMG's commitment to create and maintain accurate collections management information in order to:
   • Establish accountability for the objects for which it is responsible (including objects temporarily in the care of SMG)
   • Meet or exceed professional standards
   • Maintain credibility with funding bodies, donors, lenders and the general public
   • Enable staff to look after the objects in SMG's care
   • Ensure that objects can be used to their full potential
   • Help staff to answer collections enquiries from other museums, researchers and the general public
   • Strengthen the security of the collections
   • Facilitate physical and intellectual access to the collections

2.2. SMG is committed to maintaining the standards laid down in the *Arts Council England Museums Accreditation Scheme*, which defines good practise and sets nationally agreed baseline standards for museums in the UK. All SMG museums are fully accredited by ACE. SMG is committed to meeting the standards laid down in the Archives Service Accreditation Scheme of the UK Archive Service Accreditation Partnership. SMG intends to apply for Archives Accreditation for each of its museums.

2.3. As required by the Museums Accreditation standard, SMG will maintain the primary procedures from *Spectrum 5.0: the UK Collections Management Standard* (Collections Trust), which represents a common understanding of good practice for collections management in museums and supports the activities involved in managing physical and digital collections and their associated information.

2.4. The Spectrum primary procedures constitute a collections management system that will provide accountability, ensuring that SMG knows for which objects it is legally responsible and where each is located.

2.5. For each procedure, the Spectrum standard requires a written policy statement. The SMG Documentation Policy Statements for each of the Spectrum primary procedures and any other procedures introduced from time to time will be approved by the SMG Collections Group.

2.6. For archive collections, SMG will meet the requirements of *ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description* (International Council on Archives, 2007). The SMG Documentation Policy Statements will incorporate cataloguing and collection processing statements relating to archives.

2.7. SMG is committed to providing and maintaining collections management systems that enable the recording and retrieval of collections information. Currently SMG operates two collections databases (Mimsy XG for objects and Adlib for archives), as well as a Digital Asset Management System (iBase Trinity). Paper records are also maintained.

2.8. The Director of ICT and Group Head of Collections Services are responsible for ensuring a periodic review of Collection Management Systems is undertaken to ensure they are fit for purpose.

2.9. Collections information is also maintained in paper and photographic records, including card indexes, Nominal Files, Technical Files and record photographs.

2.10. Collections audit verifies the presence of objects and the accuracy of associated information. Collections information will be made available for inspection by SMG's auditors on request.

2.11. Collection items acquired as digital (objects, images, audio, video) will be catalogued in the same way as physical objects and the original digital 'master' will be preserved as a sustainable digital asset.

2.12. SMG aims to digitise as much of its physical collection as resources permit, in order to improve digital accessibility. All generated digital assets will be managed in the Digital Asset Management System with sufficient metadata to make them discoverable.

2.13. A Digital Preservation Strategy will be developed, specifying how digital collection items will be managed, stored, and preserved.

2.14. SMG's approach to the security of information assets is set out in the *SMG ICT Policy (2013), the SMG Information Management Policy (2017)* and *ITG002 – Information Risk Policy - Provisions for maintaining the confidentiality, integrity and accessibility of information (2014)*.

3.   COLLECTIONS ACCESS

3.1. This policy sets out SMG's commitment to enable and extend access to collections and associated information, in proportion to the resources available.

3.2. SMG is committed to enabling access to the collections and associated records, both physically and digitally, in accordance with the *SMG Conservation Policy (2018)* and the *SMG Digital Strategy (2015)*.

3.3. SMG provides access to and understanding of its collections through:
   • Displays and exhibitions at SMG sites
   • Touring exhibitions at SMG and external venues
   • The operation of historic objects (selected and managed in line with the *SMG Conservation Policy (2018)*)
   • The use of handling collections
   • A range of learning programmes (as outlined in the *SMG Learning Strategy 2016-2020*)
   • A programme of national and international loans
   • Content on the SMG websites, including *Collections Online*
   • The use of social media channels

3.4. SMG is committed to providing greater access to its collections, knowledge, expertise and skills, through its work with organisations in the UK and internationally, including lending objects for temporary exhibitions, gallery displays and research.

3.5. Objects from SMG's stored collections may be viewed by appointment. Access to objects that are hazardous to health or subject to legislative requirements (including but not restricted to those set out in section 3.11) may be restricted.

3.6. Occasionally, SMG will undertake large-scale collections management projects which may affect access to the collections. While every effort will be made to minimise disruption to collections access, some projects will necessitate a temporary restriction of access.

3.7. SMG will continue to publish and make available a list of human remains in its collections, in accordance with the *Guidelines for the care of Human Remains in Museums (DCMS 2005)* and the *SMG Human Remains Policy (2018)*. SMG will consider the requirements of the *Freedom of Information Act* as the minimum for the provision of information relating to human remains in its care.

3.8. The competing demands of access and long-term care will be managed in accordance with the outcome of collection care risk assessments.

3.9.   SMG provides online access to collections information (text and images) through SMG websites and via *Collections Online* (objects and archives), Adlib Online (archives), Koha (Science Museum library), and Alma (NRM library). These are updated as new information become available, and where no rights or data restrictions apply.

3.10. Arrangements to use collections information (text and images) for commercial purposes may be made through SMG Enterprises Limited. SMG will adopt permissive, 'open' content licenses – such as Creative Commons – that enable non-commercial reuse of images and metadata, while protecting the commercial use of its assets.

3.11. SMG staff have a duty of care to protect sensitive or confidential collections information (including information held in the collection), in accordance with UK law. All public requests for information are considered in compliance with the *General Data Protection Regulation*, the *Data Protection Act 2018*, *The Freedom of Information Act 2000* ("FOIA") and *The Environmental Information Regulations 2004*. Information for release may be redacted in accordance with applicable exemptions. The Corporate Information team will advise on such matters.

3.12. The *SMG Freedom of Information Policy* and the *SMG Data Protection Notice* are published on the SMG website.

4.   POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.1.   Managers in all relevant departments will ensure that the Collections Management Policy Framework and supporting procedures for the management and care of the collections are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.

4.2.   All staff responsible for creating and managing collections information will receive the appropriate training to create documentation in accordance with SMG procedures. Collection information will be recorded in an accurate and timely way that is retrievable and auditable.

4.3.   The Group Head of Collections Services is responsible for ensuring that training is available, and managers in all relevant departments are responsible for ensuring that their staff receive training.

4.4.   The *Science Museum Group Plan* sets out group-wide actions and resources for the current year to deliver progress against SMG Strategic Priorities. The plan identifies key strategic risks and actions for their mitigation and is reviewed annually.

4.5.   The Group Head of Collections Services is responsible for ensuring that regular internal audits, including location audits, of the collection are planned and carried out. There will be annual audits of collections management information relating to collections with associated legal or statutory requirements (including controlled drugs, radioactive objects, human tissue and firearms).

4.6.   The plan for audits will be set out annually in the *SMG Collections Audit Plan*. Results of audits will be reviewed by the Group Head of Collections Services and reported to the Collections & Research Committee.

4.7.   The *SMG Documentation Plan* identifies documentation backlogs and outlines the actions that will be taken to address them, as resources permit.