SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

COLLECTION INFORMATION AND COLLECTION ACCESS POLICY

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

- SMG Collection Development Policy
- SMG Collection Information and Collection Access Policy
- SMG Conservation Policy

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP
COLLECTION INFORMATION AND COLLECTION ACCESS POLICY

GOVERNING BODY:	**BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM**
DATE:	**JUNE 2021**
DATE FOR REVIEW:	**JUNE 2026**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Science Museum Group (SMG) is a non-departmental public body. SMG's vision, set out in *Inspiring Futures* (reissued 2020), is of a society that celebrates science, technology and engineering and their impact on our lives, now and in the future. SMG's core priorities are:

- Grow science capital in individuals and society
- Grow our audiences and exceed their expectations
- Sustain and grow our world-class collection

1.2. The Science Museum Group comprises:

- The Science Museum, London
- The Science and Industry Museum, Manchester
- The National Railway Museum, York
- Locomotion, Shildon
- The National Science and Media Museum, Bradford
- The National Collections Centre, Wroughton
- Blythe House, London

1.3. The aim of the SMG Collection Information & Collection Access Policy is to ensure that SMG fulfils its responsibilities to manage and provide access to its collections and associated information. This responsibility is in line with its aim that the SMG Collection will be the best in the world for its fields: well understood, well housed and accessible (physically and digitally), and used effectively by SMG and others for research, display, learning and pleasure.

1.4. This policy has been prepared in line with *PAS 197:2007 Code for cultural collections management*.

Legal and ethical context

1.5. 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

1.6. SMG complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010. 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 (2020) and the *SMG Group Ethics Policy* (2019).

1.7. SMG's *Statement of Public Task* (2016) sets out the organisation's public task as defined in The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015. All public requests for information are considered in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016, the Data Protection Act 2018, The Freedom of Information Act 2000, and The Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Information for release may be redacted in accordance with applicable exemptions.

2. COLLECTION INFORMATION

Principles of Collection Information

2.1. This policy applies to information about both physical and digital collection items, and both archive and object collection items, in the care of SMG. It sets out SMG's commitment to create and maintain accurate collection 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 collection enquiries from other museums, researchers and the general public

- strengthen the security of the collection
- facilitate physical and intellectual access to the collection

2.2. The Digital Preservation Policy (forthcoming) will set out SMG's commitment and approach to managing, storing and preserving digital collection items.

Collection Information standards

2.3. SMG is committed to maintaining the standards laid down in the *Arts Council England Museums Accreditation Scheme*, which defines good practice and sets nationally agreed baseline standards for museums in the UK. All SMG museums are fully accredited by ACE. SMG is committed to meeting and maintaining the standards laid down in the Archives Service Accreditation Scheme of the UK Archive Service Accreditation Partnership. Search Engine at the National Railway Museum is an Accredited archive. SMG intends to apply for Archive Service Accreditation for each of its other archives. For archive collections, SMG will meet the requirements of *ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description* (International Council on Archives, 2007).

2.4. 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 collection management in museums and supports the activities involved in managing physical and digital collections and their associated information.

2.5. 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.

2.6. For each procedure, the Spectrum standard requires a written policy statement. The SMG Documentation Policy Statements will incorporate cataloguing and collection processing statements relating to objects and archives. 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.

Collection Information systems

2.7. SMG is committed to providing and maintaining collection management systems that enable the recording and retrieval of Collection Information. Currently SMG operates two collection databases (Mimsy XG for objects and Adlib for archives), as well as a Digital Asset Management System (iBase Trinity). There are also library collection databases (Koha and Alma).

2.8. Collection Information is also maintained in paper and photographic records, including card indexes, Nominal Files, Technical Files and record photographs.

2.9. Collection items acquired as digital (objects, images, audio, video) will be catalogued using comparable descriptive standards to physical objects, adding metadata for preservation purposes. The original digital 'master' will be preserved as a sustainable digital asset.

2.10. 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.

Collection Information security and audit

2.11. SMG's approach to the security of information assets is set out in the *SMG Information Management Policy* (2020) and other policies and procedures set out in the *SMG Information Management Assurance Framework*.

2.12. Collection audit verifies the presence of objects and the accuracy of associated information. SMG will audit collection items and records in line with statutory requirements where applicable and a risk-based approach to other items. Collection Information will be made available for inspection by SMG's auditors on request.

3. COLLECTION ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Principles of Collection Access

3.1. Collection Access is defined as the ways in which people can see, use, and reference SMG's collection. This includes the provision of physical access to SMG's museums and collection facilities, and sharing information about the collection with people.

3.2. Open for All is one of SMG's core values. SMG is committed to enabling and extending access to its collection and associated information, as resources permit.

3.3. The SMG Equity Framework (2020) identifies four key principles that will help SMG to change how it works to ensure all people can have equitable access to an inspiring experience with science:

- Identifying exclusion and inequity
- Fostering an equitable environment
- Working in partnership to make change happen
- Reflecting and embedding structural change

3.4. The *SMG Access Framework* (2020) identifies four key principles that will enable SMG to identify and recognise barriers that exclude disabled visitors and staff and then take action to address them:

- Consulting: we work in long-term partnerships with disabled consultants and visitors to embed their needs and experiences into our work
- Representing: guided by the principles of our Equity framework, we use science-capital informed approaches to work with disabled people to positively represent their experiences and lives
- Enabling: seeking the advice of access professionals, we ensure that we provide facilities and resources which enable all visitors to enjoy and engage with our museums and collection online
- Reviewing: we reflect on, review and seek the opinions of disabled people to learn and develop our practice

3.5. SMG is committed to enabling access to the collection and associated records, both physically and digitally, in accordance with the *SMG Learning Strategy 2020-2030* (2019), *SMG Conservation Policy* (2018) and the *SMG Digital Strategy* (2015).

Provision of access to the collection and information

3.6. SMG provides access to and understanding of science and its collection through:

- permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions and displays 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
- collection study and research facilities and enquiry services
- a programme of national and international loans
- content on the SMG websites, including Collections Online
- the use of social media channels
- publication of open data under Creative Commons licences
- volunteering programmes

3.7. SMG offers dedicated programmes for a range of audience groups. Visitors want different levels of interpretation. Temporary exhibitions afford opportunities to focus on particular topics or issues, to look at the collection in different ways, and to bring in artefacts and expertise from elsewhere. Over time a broad range of audience segments may be targeted.

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

Physical access to the collection

3.9. SMG welcomes visits to view items on display in galleries and exhibitions during the opening hours of SMG's museums and in line with booking arrangements (where applicable) and conditions of entry advertised on each museum's website.

3.10. SMG welcomes visits to view items that are not on display. At some locations visits may be available through public events advertised on websites, for which booking may be required. For all other locations booking for access is required and details of how to make an enquiry are advertised on websites.

3.11. Access to items that are culturally sensitive, hazardous to health or subject to legislative requirements, conditions of deposit, or significant security, or collection care considerations may be restricted. The competing demands of access and long-term care will be managed in accordance with the outcome of collection care risk assessments.

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

Access to Collection Information

3.13. SMG provides online access to Collection 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), and through the Collection API. These are updated as new information becomes available, and where no rights or data restrictions apply.

3.14. SMG will continue to publish and make available a list of human remains in the collection, 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 2000 as the minimum for the provision of information relating to human remains in its care.

3.15. In rare circumstances, it will not be appropriate to publish online a photograph of an object, or an object record. These circumstances are considered in guidance on *When not to publish images or records to collections online* (2020).

3.16. SMG staff have a duty of care to protect sensitive or confidential Collection Information (including information held in the collection), in accordance with UK law. The *SMG Data Protection Notice* is published on the SMG website.

Intellectual property and reuse of Collection Information

3.17. SMG seeks to enable audience's reuse of images of collection objects and other content to increase reach and promote the collection. We aim to achieve this through adoption of a range of Creative Commons content licences that enable reuse by audiences.

3.18. The Creative Commons policy, SMG's *Statement of Public Task and Guidance on Re-use* of material defined in the Statement are available on the Group website. SMG does not hold the rights to some items in the collection. Creative Commons licences apply where indicated on SMG websites and do not apply to all the content on websites.

4.   POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.1.   Managers in all relevant departments will ensure that the Collection Management Policy Framework and supporting procedures for the management and care of the collection and access to the museums and collection are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.

4.2.   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.

Collection Information policy implementation

4.3.   All staff responsible for creating and managing Collection 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.

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

4.5.   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.

4.6.   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 audits of collections management information relating to collections with associated legal or statutory requirements (including controlled drugs, radioactive objects, human tissue and firearms) at frequencies in line with legal and regulatory requirements.

4.7.   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.

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

4.9.   SMG Archives will produce and implement a plan that specifies the actions that are being taken to enhance existing catalogue records and address cataloguing backlogs, as resources permit. SMG Archives will produce and implement plan to continuously improve access and engagement in response to the identified needs and interests of each Archive's stakeholders.

Collection Access policy implementation

4.10. The SMG Open for All Steering Group will implement the *Equity Framework* and *Access Framework* through the *Open for All Plan*.

4.11. The Digital Director is responsible for ensuring online access to information and data under Creative Commons licences.

4.12. The Group Head of Collections Services and Principal/Head Curators are responsible for ensuring access to object, archive and library collections.

4.13. The Corporate Information team is responsible for ensuring that public requests for information are considered in line with legislation.

4.14. Arrangements to use Collection Information (text and images) for commercial purposes may be made through SMG Enterprises Limited.