



Birmingham Museums Trust

Collections Management Framework

Appendix 2.1 Documentation Policy 2020-25

1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of Birmingham Museum Trust's (BMT) policy regarding documentation of the collection. This policy was agreed by Birmingham Museum Trust's Board of Trustees on 20 February 2020, and Birmingham City Council on 05 August 2020.

This policy forms part of the Collections Management Framework for BMT, which supports BMT to achieve its vision, core purpose and strategic aims. These are:

Vision

To reflect Birmingham to the world, and the world to Birmingham.

Core Purpose

To showcase our outstanding collections and venues to inspire learning, creativity and enjoyment for the people of Birmingham and visitors to the region.

Strategic Aims

1. Leading in Excellence
2. Developing the collection and venues
3. Growing and diversifying audiences
4. Building a sustainable business
5. Investing in people

The Documentation Policy also supports BMT's Ten-Year Strategy for 2018-2027 and its signature projects.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Birmingham City Council's museum collection is managed on its behalf by Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT). This policy will guide BMT's work in the area of collections documentation. Documentation underpins all aspects of museum activity. Recording collection information is key to BMT being accountable for the collection, its accessibility, management, research, study and use.

The collection includes both physical and digital objects. Information about the collection and associated intellectual property is key to enabling public access to the collection in support of learning, creativity and enjoyment.

Information about the collection is currently recorded in a variety of formats:

- Digitally on the collections management system, KE EMu
- Paper based records in object history files
- Accession Registers

- Inventory cards
- In a variety of other manual records such as site files, artist files, stock books etc.

BMT's Collections Management System, KE EMu, is SPECTRUM Compliant and, with the exception of the Natural Science collection, the majority of BMT documentation conforms to SPECTRUM 4.0 – the UK Standard for Collections Management and BSI's PAS197 (see BMT Documentation Plan 2019-24 for backlog details).

3. AIMS

The aim of the Documentation Policy is to ensure that BMT fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access of the collection. It aims to:

- Improve accountability for the collection and the management of related data
- Maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation and seek to attain the very highest standards wherever possible
- Extend access to collection information
- Strengthen the security of the collection

BMT is committed to maintaining at least the minimum level of collections documentation that allows it to identify and locate all items for which it is legally responsible, including loans.

4. ETHICS & LEGISLATION

Collections information will be recorded in compliance with all legal requirements, including the Freedom of Information Act (2000), and have been reviewed for compliance with the Data Protection Act (2018).

Collections information will be acquired, stored, managed and used in compliance with the Museum Association's Code of Ethics for Museums and to SPECTRUM Standards.

5. DOCUMENTATION STANDARDS

5.1 BMT is committed to following SPECTRUM, the UK Collections Management Standard, and to meeting the minimum standards for the SPECTRUM primary procedures in relation to:

- Object Entry
- Object Exit
- Acquisition
- Location and movement control
- Cataloguing
- Loan In
- Loan Out
- Retrospective Documentation

5.2 BMT's Minimum and Target Levels for Documentation

| Fields | Inventory Standard | Enhanced Standard | IMu / Web Minimum | Accreditation Minimum | SPECTRUM Minimum |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Object Number | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Collection | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Object Status | ✓ | ✓ | Not published on web | | |
| Number of Objects (only if a group of objects) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Simple Name | ✓ | ✓ | Searched, not displayed | ✓ | |
| Full Name | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Title / Taxonomy / Technical Name* | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Provenance (enter known unknowns) | | ✓ | Not published on web | | |
| Maker(s) / Collector(s) (enter known unknowns) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Maker Role* | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Production / Collection Date / Period - enter period only of dates are unknown | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Production Place / Collection Locality (enter known unknowns) | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Associations / Excavation Notes / Inscriptions / School Style / Medium Technique* | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Dimensions & Date | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Weight | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Condition | ✓ | ✓ | Not published on web | | |
| Materials | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Hazardous Materials | ✓ | ✓ | Not published on web | | |
| Current Location & Date | ✓ | ✓ | Not published on web | ✓ | ✓ |
| Valuation | ✓ | ✓ | Not published on web | | |
| Credit Line | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Themes | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Keywords | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Multimedia | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 2nd Level Documentation | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Mark or Label object | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

* This information is not always applicable or available

For all new acquisitions and through programmes of retrospective cataloguing and collections auditing, BMT aims to ensure that:

- Every object has documentary proof of legal title that also meets ethical standards
- Every object has the transfer of title and acquisition proposal forms stored on Ke EMu
- Every object has an accurate record in the appropriate Accessions Register
- Every object has an accession number which uniquely identifies the object with that register entry
- Every object has an accession number that is labelled or otherwise marked on the object
- Every object has a robust link with all associated documentation
- Every object has an accurate and up-to-date record of location

All staff responsible for recording and documenting collections information must firstly receive the necessary training in the relevant data standards and Collections Management System (CMS), KE EMu, to enable accurate and consistent input and retrieval of collection information. Staff will not be granted access to the CMS if they have not received this training. All data entered onto the CMS will be traceable through an audit trail function within the KE Emu software, showing who created or modified such data.

All staff responsible for recording collections information must comply with BMT's guidelines for Inventory Standard and Enhanced Standard documentation. The table above defines BMT's minimum, mandatory level for Inventory Standard compared to its ideal, target level for documentation (Enhanced Standard). This is compared to minimum SPECTRUM and Accreditation standards, for which it exceeds both. All objects must adhere to BMT's Inventory Standard. For all new acquisitions and through targeted, annual programmes of more detailed documentation in specific collection areas, BMT aims to raise the standard of collection information to its Enhanced Standard.

5.3 Object Entry

All objects entering Birmingham Museums Trust must be documented on KE EMu to at least the BMT Inventory Standard, with the exception of short term loans in (max. 6 months) which must be documented to at least the minimum SPECTRUM standard. Any object received by BMT for any given time period, whether prior to formal acquisition or for any other reason, will be treated as a Loan In and have the relevant associated paperwork completed and signed.

- Object entry for new acquisitions must have a completed Transfer of Title form and an Object Entry Receipt
- Object entry for Loans In, whether short or long term, require a completed Conditions of Loan form and an Object Entry Receipt

5.4 Object Exit

All objects exiting BMT must firstly be documented on KE EMu in line with the Object Entry procedures. There are 3 different forms to be used for the purpose of object exit, depending on the related procedure.

Electronic templates are currently in use which are scanned and saved to a central shared folder, with originals kept in the Object History Files or Loans Files once completed.

- Loans Out, whether long or short term, require a completed Conditions of Loan form (which could be a BMT form or a copy of a form provided by the borrowing institution) and an Object Exit Receipt
- Return of Loans In require a signed Object Exit Receipt
- The exit of an object through deaccessioning, transfer or disposal must have a completed Object Exit Receipt in addition to a completed Transfer of Title form (where relevant) citing the new owner

5.5 Acquisition

Objects being considered for potential acquisition must firstly be entered into KE EMu and must include: the acquisition source, a full provenance and Due Diligence check, details regarding the object's significance, potential use, and how the object(s) support BMT's Collections Development Policy, as well as associated costs and a proposed plan for fundraising where relevant. All acquisition proposals are assessed at a monthly Collections Committee, chaired by the Director of Collections, before being recommended to and approved by BMT's Director and Senior Management Team. Objects of a high value will need further approval by BMT's Board of Trustees and Birmingham City Council.

Approved acquisitions must have an individual Object History File created where signed paperwork is filed, alongside any other relevant correspondence and information. A new acquisition must be catalogued in line with BMT's second level documentation standards within 3 months of being formally received into the Collection. Acquisitions are audited annually by the Documentation Registrar and Curatorial Manager to ensure that the procedure is strictly adhered to.

- **Accession Registers:** until 2003 paper accession registers were kept by all departments which assigned a unique Accession Number to objects and recorded basic catalogue and donor details. Receipts and letters confirming the process of acceptance of items are kept in separate historical files for each object or group of objects. From 2003 - 2012, all acquisition proposals were recorded on the former CMS, MINISIS, and since 2013 on KE Emu by the Curatorial Team.
- **Accession records:** a record must be created for all objects entering the Collection, describing each item, or group of items, and listing them by a unique identifying number. The Curators are responsible for ensuring that the relevant data for each object is in KE EMu. The Documentation Registrar is responsible for ensuring that the data is accurate and that an accessions register is produced.
- **Marking / Labelling Procedure:** all new acquisitions must be individually marked or labelled with their unique accession number. Marking / labelling is conducted in accordance with SPECTRUM guidelines and are part of the Accessioning & Cataloguing procedure. The Conservation team provide guidance and training in physical object marking to all new curatorial and collections care staff.

All new acquisitions must comply with the Collection Policy and Acquisition Procedure and will be catalogued to BMT's Enhanced Standard as part of this process.

BMT will provide a printed accessions register annually, produced by the Documentation Registrar, which records the formal acceptance of objects acquired into the Collection.

5.6 Location & Movement Control

Prior to 2003, object locations were recorded in various manual systems. Collection relocation / auditing projects over several years have resulted in the majority of objects receiving a current location on the CMS or on original paper lists stored by the collections management team.

Any new object movements must be entered on to KE EMu and their insurance valuation updated. Internal movements between BMT sites require a completed Shipping Note and Insurance Note. The member of staff responsible for commissioning the movement of objects between BMT sites is responsible for updating their location records on KE EMu in accordance with the Movements & Shipping procedure.

The Curators are responsible for the inventory level record of each collection object in KE EMu. The Documentation Registrar is responsible for the maintenance and control of the data. The inventory level contains the legal status and an accurate and up to date location for each object that BMT is legally responsible for on behalf of Birmingham City Council. These fields are part of BMT's minimum Inventory Standard documentation requirement.

Entry and exit documentation is maintained for all collection objects, or groups of objects, and other items that BMT is legally responsible for, as part of linked Collections Management procedures. The source of the object, the terms of receipt and the location of the object is recorded.

No object movement, entry or exit is complete until the relevant linked Collections Management procedure is in process via KE EMu.

The Documentation Registrar will conduct minimum quarterly spot checks and audits to verify the accuracy of data and the maintenance of Collection Management procedures.

5.7 Cataloguing

Pre-2003, catalogue cards are indexed by various categories depending on Collection Type. Information regarding individual objects can also be found in Accession Registers and Object History Files. On KE EMu, objects must be catalogued to BMT's minimum Inventory Standard (see section 4.2). All cataloguing must adhere to BMT's Accessioning & Cataloguing procedure which covers BMT's documentation standards, guidance on data entry, marking / labelling objects and creating Object History Files. KE EMu users (BMT's trained staff) catalogue objects to varying degrees based on their roles and user access privileges. This data must be quality checked by the Documentation Registrar at regular intervals throughout each year.

The history of every object in the collection and a record of any Collections Management procedures associated with it must be kept and stored safely and securely (both digital and paper based documentation). Appropriate indexes to catalogue records should be provided.

Details of gaps and backlogs in documentation and cataloguing must be maintained by the Documentation Registrar, with a clear Backlog Plan in place to address outstanding collections cataloguing (see Documentation Plan 2020-25).

An object which has been found uncatalogued / unaccessioned, or has a BMT accession number but no KE EMu record, must be formally accessioned and catalogued following BMT's procedures for Retrospective Documentation.

BMT aims to create a digital image for every newly acquired object or group of objects. BMT aims to increase the digitisation of the collection (and subsequent online access to collections information) through an annual programme of collections photography targeting previously acquired collection areas.

Curatorial and Collections Care staff must take reference 'snap shot' photography of objects not photographed, as part of the annual documentation programme, to improve object identification.

5.8 Loans In & Out

Since 2003 all Loans In and Out have been recorded on the collections management system, including length of loan and returns where appropriate. Since its installation in 2014, KE EMu currently contains only historical loans data that existed in MINISIS and is subject to data tidying and review as part of the ongoing CMS project.

The Loans Registrar currently records all loans data using a separate system which will be imported into KE EMu once the loans module has been configured. Long Loans normally run for a maximum of three years, renewable subject to review and agreement by both BMT and the Lender/Borrower.

Objects on loan to BMT only receive a full catalogue record if they are classed as 'long term' (over 6 months). Short term Loans In, which are generally not on site for longer than 6 months, are recorded on KE EMu following a formal procedure but do not receive a BMT Object Number.

Long Loans In are reassessed as a rolling programme with a view to renewal or return by the Loans Registrar and Curatorial & Exhibitions department. The Collections Management Team audit loans in for insurance and collections management purposes. All potential loans are scrutinised and assessed at the monthly Collections Committee and/or Exhibitions Committee. The procedure for loaning objects to other museums in the UK and internationally is rigorous and ensures the safety and security of the object(s).

5.9 Retrospective Documentation

Retrospective documentation must be undertaken in accordance with BMT's Accessioning & Cataloguing procedure which can be found in the 'Accessioning & Cataloguing KE EMu Procedural User Manual'. The previous large-scale collections relocation / audit projects have thrown light on areas that need further attention. All records created during this period, whether on paper lists or on the CMS, exceed SPECTRUM Minimum Standards for Accreditation. However, this Plan serves to address the audit backlog of paper lists, making sure all object movements are recorded on KE EMu with an up-to-date location, and the documentation backlog, where feasible.

6. ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

BMT is committed to providing access to the collection and its related information for learning, creativity and enjoyment. It is committed to offering the widest and most appropriate forms of access to collection information, expertise, facilities and services. BMT will support access to collections information for staff, researchers and the wider public in the following ways:

- For staff: direct access to collections information held on KE EMu (if trained) or via IMU and DAMS for all staff. Access to object history files and other paper records through the support and advice of curatorial and collections care staff.
- All staff also have access to IMU, the web-based KE EMu interface, re-developed in 2019
- For researchers: access to collection information (where it complies with Data Protection) via BMT's public enquiries programme; via facilitated visits or longer research placements/programmes supported by curatorial and collections care staff; access to online collection information via BMT websites (such as www.birminghammuseums.org.uk, www.preraphaelites.org, www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk) and through independent collection websites supported by BMT (such as www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings)
- Access also via BMT's newly implemented Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) which went live in 2019 <http://dams.birminghammuseums.org.uk/>
- For general public: access to collection information (where it complies with Data Protection) via BMT's public enquiries programme; or access to online collection information via BMT websites (such as www.birminghammuseums.org.uk, www.preraphaelites.org) and through independent collection websites supported by BMT (such as www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings); in addition to DAMS (<http://dams.birminghammuseums.org.uk/>)

BMT is committed to increasing the amount of collection information available online to the wider public, supported by its annual programme of documentation in targeted collection areas to reach Enhanced Standard, compliant for web use. BMT's previous CMS provided very restricted levels of web access to collections data, and the procurement of a new CMS (KE Emu) in 2013 was with the intention to actively improve online public access to BMT's collection information.

7. SECURITY OF COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

BMT is committed to ensuring the physical security of collection records in its various documentation systems (paper based and digital) and the long term preservation of those records, including a regular back up of electronic data and security copying of key records such as accession registers.

KE EMu is backed-up daily, with a two week retention period. Original accession registers are kept on-site in a fireproof safe, along with paper copies of new accessions since 2003. There are also electronic inventory reports, exported annually by the Documentation Registrar, held on a shared drive since 2003.

KE EMu is accessed by all BMT employees who work directly with the Collection and have undergone the necessary training. The majority of users input as well as retrieve data. Data entry and procedural data management is carried out in accordance with detailed guidelines written in procedural user manuals. User access rights are tailored on an individual basis so that staff only have access to the parts of the system and the information that they require for their job role.

8. KEEPING RECORDS UP TO DATE

Around 98% of the collection has some form of paper based documentation. Around 80% of the collection is documented on KE EMu to varying levels, all to the Accreditation minimum standard, either with an individual Object Number or as a bulk accession.

Bulk accessions are uncommon. However, there are particular parts of the collection where it has been deemed necessary and acceptable to bulk accession collection areas, until such time when expertise and resources will allow for these bulk accession collections to be broken down into part numbers with meaningful information given to each individual object. Bulk accessioned objects include archaeological excavation archives, large but discrete natural science collections such as the herbaria of individual collectors, and other large collections formed by and acquired from individuals including the philately collection.

BMT is committed to ensuring that the Collections Management System, KE EMu, is the primary tool for creating and managing collections information, processes and items for which BMT is legally responsible. This includes in-house digital asset management. All systems follow back-up procedures as set out in Section 4 Acquisition: Security Copy.

BMT will review, update and improve paper based object history files and associated records as part of its annual collections documentation and cataloguing programme.

BMT will carry out regular reviews of these systems and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose and that collection information is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence.

9. RELATED DOCUMENTS

In addition to the documents that comprise the Collections Management Framework, the Conservation Policy is also supported by procedural manual.

10. POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

This Access Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years or at the expiry of the Agreement. The next date for review will be no later than April 2025.