



Birmingham Museums Trust

Collections Management Framework 2015-2019

1. Introduction

The Collections Management Framework concerns the management of Birmingham City Council's museum collection, managed on its behalf by Birmingham Museums Trust, and in the context of the nine sites operated by Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT). These sites comprise: Aston Hall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG), Blakesley Hall, Museum Collections Centre, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Sarehole Mill, Soho House, Thinktank and Weoley Castle.

The Collections Management Framework sets out Birmingham Museums Trust's principles, methods and priorities for undertaking and improving the management of the collection over the period 2015-19 including its management, development, documentation, care and conservation.

This framework is supported by the accompanying appendices:

- Documentation Policy and Plan 2015-19
- Collection Care and Conservation Policy and Plan 2015-19.

The Collections Management Framework is also further supported by Birmingham Museums Trust's separate Lending, Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2014-19, which includes the Trust's Collections Development Policy for the period 2014-19.

The Collections Management Framework and related policies and plans support BMT to achieve its vision, mission and core aims. These are:

Vision

Birmingham Museums Trust will be the best museum service in England, supporting learning and access for all through programmes of academic and artistic excellence.

Mission

To use our venues and collection to provide learning, creativity and enjoyment for citizens and visitors to the city.

Aims

Birmingham Museums Trust will:

- be active stewards of the collection and buildings in our care
- use real objects to inspire learning, creativity and enjoyment
- put Birmingham communities at the heart of our decision-making
- innovate to achieve financial, social and environmental sustainability
- reflect Birmingham to the world and the world to Birmingham

The Collections Management Framework also supports BMT's organisational priorities for 2014-19 are:

- A new Museum and Art Gallery for the 21st century
- Growing audiences
- Developing the collection

- Building a sustainable business
- Investing in people

2. Collections Management Aims and Priorities 2015-19

The Collections Management Framework identifies five key areas for development over the period 2015-19 and the key aims and priorities to support each of these areas of work.

2.1 Provide Access to the Collection for Learning, Creativity and Enjoyment

BMT aims to:

- Provide public access to the collection through displays, exhibitions and loans to other museums
- Provide public access to the collection through increasing data to support BMT's online collections database, BMT websites (such as www.birminghammuseums.org.uk, www.preraphaelites.org) and through supporting externally-run collection websites (such as www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings)
- Provide public access to the collection when not on display and in storage, as well as the information held about the collection, through:
 - Learning and Engagement programmes
 - Facilitated tours and visits
 - Public open days
 - Collection research projects

2.2 Develop more sustainable and better managed collections

BMT aims to:

- Maintain and raise standards against Benchmarks in Collections Care at all sites
- Continue the collection asbestos survey and establish dedicated plans and procedures for dealing with asbestos containing objects
- Review storage needs at the Museum Collections Centre (MCC) and implement a plan to increase storage capacity and improve the overall quality of storage facilities
- Complete the relocation of all non-fine art reserve collections to the MCC
- Develop a Rationalisation Plan to actively identify and manage disposals from the collection, improving collection storage capacity
- Implement BMT's long term loans-in returns programme, to improve collection storage capacity
- Reduce the annual number of collection loans to reflect BMT's reduced level of resources, ensuring the continuation of a high quality and sustainable collection loans service
- Develop and implement a plan to update insurance valuations for the entire collection

2.3 Raise standards of collections documentation

BMT aims to:

- Complete the backlog collections cataloguing of the Natural Science collection
- Continue to undertake a regular, targeted collection audit at the MCC and update collections records and the CMS accordingly

- Review and where necessary renew object marking and labelling as part of the collection audit
- Ensure current and new BMT staff are trained to effectively use the Collections Management System, KE
- Implement an annual programme to raise the standard of archival storage and accessibility to the paper 'object history' files
- Implement an annual programme of second level documentation to raise standards and allow more of the collection to be accessible online
- Implement an annual programme to improve the quality and content of object history files
- Implement an annual programme of collections digitisation (high quality photography) supported by low quality 'quick reference photography' to improve collection access and identification

2.4 Ensure adequate care and conservation of the collection

BMT aims to:

- Regularly monitor and report annually on temperature and humidity
- Regularly monitor and report annually on light levels
- Regularly monitor and report annually on integrated pest management
- Regularly monitor and report quarterly on collection incidents
- Undertake interventive conservation to accepted standards to facilitate loans, exhibitions, displays and capital projects
- Secure additional resources to support BMT's collections care programmes through volunteers, student placements, traineeships and internships
- Support the development and implementation of a mitigation strategy to safeguard the collection from the potential impact of HS2 works at the MCC and Thinktank, Paradise Forum works adjacent to Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, and the planned refurbishment of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery as part of the BMAG 21c project

2.5 Actively develop the collection

The following strategic collecting objectives set a framework for collections development over the five year period up to 2019, as detailed in BMT's separate Lending, Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2014-19:

- To engage with and consult audiences about collecting, encouraging personal donations
- To develop pro-active, creative and responsive programmes of contemporary collecting
- To represent the way in which the city and its people have changed over time
- To collect material that reflects growing up, living and working in Birmingham
- To increase the representation of BAME artists, designers and makers
- To increase the representation of artists, designers and makers with a close association to Birmingham
- To tell the story of technological innovation, industrial design and production in Birmingham
- To collect material that reflects Birmingham to the world, and the world to Birmingham
- To collect material that supports BMT's priority projects including the major redevelopment of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, and the display masterplan for Thinktank
- To acquire objects of pre-eminent quality which contribute to the breadth, range and quality of the collection

3. Responsibilities

The collection is owned by Birmingham City Council and managed on its behalf by Birmingham Museums Trust.

Birmingham Museums Trust's Board of Trustees determines the overall Collections Management Framework and delegate responsibility for the management of the collection to the Director of Birmingham Museums Trust.

The Director of Birmingham Museums Trust has overall responsibility for the management, care and development of the collection.

The Director of Collections leads the implementation of the Collections Management Framework and accompanying Documentation Policy, Collection Care and Conservation Policy, and Lending Acquisitions and Disposals Policy.

The Collection Care Manager leads the planning and delivery of the Collections Care and Conservation Plan, and Documentation Plan.

The Curatorial and Exhibitions Manager coordinates acquisitions in support of the Collections Development Policy.

The delivery of the above plans is supported by the wider Collections staff including Collections and Conservation Team Leaders, Loans and Documentation Registrars, Conservators, Curators and Collection Support Officers.

4. Other Relevant Policies

In addition to this Collection Management Policy and accompanying appendices, the following policies and guidelines also support the effective management of the collection:

- Lending, Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2014-19, which includes BMT's Collections Development Policy 2014-19
- Lending Guidelines and Procedures 2014
- Exhibitions & Displays Policy 2014-19
- Learning Strategy 2015-19
- Interpretation Guidelines and Interpretation Standards

5. Policy Review

The Collections Management Framework and its accompanying Documentation and Collection Care & Conservation Policies will be reviewed in March 2019. The accompanying Documentation and Collection Care & Conservation plans will be reviewed on an annual basis

6. Policy Approved

This Collections Management Framework and accompanying policies and plans was approved by the Trustees of Birmingham Museums Trust at a meeting on the 11 February 2015.

Toby Watley
Director of Collections – Birmingham Museums Trust

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Documentation Policy 2015-19

Appendix 2 Documentation Plan 2015-19

Appendix 3 Collection Care and Conservation Policy 2015-19

Appendix 4 Collection Care and Conservation Plan 2015-19