



FOR INFO

A POLICY TO BUILD AND
SHARE INFORMATION
ABOUT COLLECTIONS

2019

For the *love* of Scotland

For Info: A Policy to Build and Share Information about Collections

Approved by Board of Trustees, 27 March 2019

Review date: 27 March 2024

1. Why we gather and share information on collections

- a. We obtain, manage and make available information on our collections in order to fulfil our mission to protect and provide access to Scotland's historic places, objects and areas of natural beauty for the benefit of the nation. Knowing more about an object allows us to look after it better and enhances the enjoyment of visitors and countless others online.
- b. We believe that information about people and things is as valuable as physical objects so gathering, maintaining and sharing it is a fundamental part of our mission.
- c. It is also our duty as an owner of collections to maintain information on those collections. Managing collections information means we can account for the items that Trust is legally responsible for, including: permanent collections, loans to the Trust, items on deposit, unaccessioned and previously undocumented items.
- d. By maintaining central records of collections location and condition, and carrying out regular audits of that information, we improve the security of the collections and can monitor the collections systematically for conservation needs.

2. What we mean by 'collections' and 'collections information'

- a. Collections held by the Trust are the things we have purposefully selected to keep for the future and include a broad representation of material culture of value to Scotland. We use the word 'collection' to include our collections of material culture, archives, books, and photographs. We exclude from this term, anything that cannot be moved, such as buildings and monuments (with the exception of portable archaeology). The Trust also uses the term 'collection' to describe our living plant collections. The living plant collections are not covered by this policy.
- b. Collections information is data that the Trust collects, creates, holds and maintains about objects and groups of objects, and data about data (sometimes referred to as 'metadata') which records more technical details about how we manage collections information.

3. How we obtain and maintain collections information

- a. We are committed to ensuring that the information we hold relating to the collections is relevant, accurate, secure, and accessible.
- b. We realise that information on our collections can come from a wide variety of sources so our approach to gathering that information will be as diverse as possible. This includes a commitment to encouraging and respecting user-generated content. We aim to capture as much information as possible as early as possible, ideally before the acquisition of an object.
- c. We are committed to implementing the Spectrum 5.0 (2017) primary procedures across all our material culture collections. In addition, the Trust aims to create a digital image of each collection item or group of items in our museum collections.
- d. We will put in place further Spectrum-compliant procedures as and when these are useful for the management of collections.

- e. We are committed to implementing the General International Standard Archival Description ISAD(G) across our archive collections, and for books an appropriate library standard. Digitisation of archives and books will be prioritised according to significance and research and engagement potential.
- f. The Trust is committed to maintaining a collections information system (currently, Adlib Collections Management System and Portfolio Digital Asset Management System integrated with Collections Information Integration Middleware middleware). This is our primary tool for recording and managing collections information and for auditing the items for which the Trust is held responsible.
- g. We are committed to providing and maintaining physically and for long-term preservation collections information records, whether paper or digital, and to operate a collections management system that enables access to and efficient retrieval of the information for relevant staff.
- h. Our collections management system is hosted externally and backed up under the terms of a service level agreement managed by the NTS IT team.
- i. Details of gaps and backlogs of documentation are maintained centrally, where relevant. A plan to complete cataloguing gaps is in place and progress will be made as resources permit.
- j. All staff responsible for collections documentation must receive training in the relevant data standards and collections information system, both digital and paper-based, to enable the accurate input and retrieval of collections information. All data shall be traceable through an audit trail as to who created or edited it.
- k. It is the responsibility of centrally based collections management staff to provide induction, training and clear protocols to relevant staff on how to maintain accurate collections data, with a particular focus on location control, audit, condition, and reporting loss and damage.

- l. It is the responsibility of regional management teams to ensure that property staff follow these protocols to achieve a 'one Trust' approach to maintaining the integrity of the data and protecting the collections.

- m. A rolling programme of collections auditing is in place to verify locations and maintain the accuracy of the collections management database. Responsibility for collections audit is shared between regional management teams and consultancy services staff.

- n. Digital preservation is the process of active management required to ensure long term and reliable access to digital records. We recognise the need to develop sustainable but flexible strategies for managing all digital records that we acquire as well as those we create, including an ongoing commitment to providing adequate data storage capacity. As part of our sustainable approach to digital preservation we prioritise what we digitise and what we retain, based on significance and demand for access.

- o. Security and confidentiality of information are very important to the Trust. Where information is confidential we are committed to maintaining confidentiality and will make every effort to protect and control access to sensitive information in line with current data protection legislation and the Museums Association *Code of Ethics*. The collections management team will allocate appropriate levels of access to collections information to staff and volunteers based on the needs of their role. This will be reviewed regularly, at least once per year.

- p. All documentation relating to due diligence (see *Developing Collections: A Policy to Reflect and Enrich Lives*, Section 4, 2019) are to be retained: all relevant correspondence, details of published information, signed loan agreements, lender's evidence, and photographic evidence is to be kept on permanent files and in accordance with data protection legislation.

4. How we make collections information available

- a. **Stories and facts:** Stories can make ordinary artefacts more interesting. They can have a humanising effect. They are a popular and accessible way of packaging information on collections. We value intangible heritage and find ways of recording and sharing it. This means capturing stories as well as the facts on which they are based.
- b. **Digital:** We use digital technology to do the things that only digital can do rather than trying to replicate the physical experience. We endeavour to have the most open form of online access to collections data and images for the public, with the exception of value-added images and services or those for commercial use. As much as possible of our digital content is covered by the Attribution-Non Commercial or CC BY-NC Creative Commons licence (see *Advancing Access: A Policy for Audiences and Collections*, 2018, and *NTS Photography and Filming Policy*, 2017)).
- c. **Accessible language:** We use simple, precise language to describe collections in order to aid understanding and increase enjoyment. We are culturally sensitive to languages directly associated with our collections and will, wherever possible, use those languages in object records. (See *NTS Gaelic Policy*, 2005)
- d. **Sharing and listening:** In making information available we also listen to the views of others and use any relevant, verifiable collections-related information to enrich others' understanding and enjoyment of collections. This is particularly true of collections-based research which should be shared openly and freely as a knowledge commons about the Trust's collection.

5. Ethics and legislation

As a responsible steward of Scotland's heritage, the Trust has an ethical responsibility to look after and promote collections information on its own collections and those loaned to it. We will be guided by national and international standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively:

Spectrum 5.0, Collections Trust (2017)

ISAD(G) – General International Standard Archival Description

Dublin Core metadata element set

BS4971: 2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections

PAS 197: 2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management

BS ISO 15489 Information and documentation records management

Data Protection Act, 1998

General Data Protection Regulation, 2018

Museums Association Code of Ethics, 2016

6. When this policy will be reviewed

This policy will be reviewed at least every 5 years. Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to ensure the policy continues to comply with Museum Accreditation standards. The next date of review will be no later than March 2024.

7. References

Advancing Access: A Policy for Audiences and Collections (2018)

Developing Collections: A Policy to Reflect and Enrich Lives (2019)

Sharing Collections: A Policy on Lending and Borrowing (2019)

Caring for Collections: A Policy to Protect Significance (2019)

Conservation, Learning, Access and Enjoyment Principles (2018)

NTS Equality and Diversity Policy (2012)

NTS Collections & Interiors Review (2017)

NTS Experiencing Collections (2017)

NTS Experiencing Things (2018)

NTS Acquisitions Policy (2002)

NTS Gaelic Policy (2005)

NTS Photography and Filming Policy, 2017



OUR VISION

Scotland's heritage is valued by everyone and protected now and for future generations

OUR OBJECTIVES

To protect and care for Scotland's heritage

To provide opportunities for everyone to experience and value Scotland's heritage

To promote the benefits of heritage

To create an efficient and sustainable business which supports our conservation needs

OUR VALUES

VIBRANT

CARING

INCLUSIVE

CURIOUS

BRAVE

The National Trust for Scotland, Hermiston Quay, 5 Cultins Road, Edinburgh EH11 4DF
Call us on 0131 458 0200 or +44 (0) 131 458 0303 from outside the UK email information@nts.org.uk visit nts.org.uk

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland. Charity Number SC007410